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Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
2nd Edition

Monstrous Compendium®

Ravenloft®

APPENDIX II: Children of the Night

New villains for your RAVENLOFT® campaign!

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons®
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Ravenloft®

Monstrous Compendium®

Appendix II:
Children of the Night

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How To Use This Book

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Welcome to the 15th *Monstrous Compendium*® Appendix. This is the second volume devoted to the dreadful creatures that live in Ravenloft, the infamous Demiplane of Dread. As in previous volumes, all of the monsters are presented on individual loose-leaf pages so that they can be easily added to a master binder for use during game play.

All the monsters presented in this book are unique individuals. This is a major change from the traditional MC format which is explained more fully in the introduction. Because of this, a Dungeon Master (DM) may want to keep these pages separate from other *Monstrous Compendium* appendices.

All the creatures presented in this book are intended for use in the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting. It is, of course, perfectly acceptable for a DM to use these monsters in other AD&D® game worlds, although minor modifications may be required. Dungeon Masters will find that some of these entries are based upon information presented in the *Dark Lords* accessory (RR1) and the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set.

Each entry will include the following information:

CLIMATE/TERRAIN: Unlike other *Monstrous Compendium* appendices, this MC lists the specific domain in which each of these creatures can be found.

FREQUENCY: All the monsters in this book are unique creatures. As such, the normal classifications of very rare, rare, uncommon, and common are not used.

ORGANIZATION: This description applies to the company that the monster keeps, rather than to the creature itself. A vampire who leads a pack of ghouls would therefore be listed as part of a *pack* organization.

ACTIVITY CYCLE: This is a general guide to the time of day when the monster is most likely to be active.

DIET: This entry gives a quick description of the way in which a monster sustains itself. The most common possibilities are *herbivore, carnivore,* and *omnivore.*

INTELLIGENCE: This rating indicates the creature's mental abilities according to the following scale:

0	Non-intelligent or not ratable
1	Animal intelligence
2–4	Semi-intelligent
5–7	Low intelligence
8–10	Average (human) intelligence
11–12	Very intelligent
13–14	Highly intelligent
15–16	Exceptionally intelligent
17–18	Genius
19–20	Supra-genius
21+	Godlike intelligence

TREASURE: This entry is a reference to the treasure tables in the AD&D *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide.* Treasures listed in parentheses are found in the creature's lair while all others may be carried with the monster when encountered elsewhere.

ALIGNMENT: This entry indicates the typical patterns of behavior for the monster.

NO. APPEARING: Because these creatures are all unique, only one of them will be encountered at any given time. However, the DM should remember that several of them will typically be accompanied by servants and followers.

ARMOR CLASS: This entry lists the unarmored rating for each creature.

MOVEMENT: This rating defines the speed at which the monster moves in a combat situation. Different modes of travel will be indicated by the following abbreviations:
Fl = flying, *Sw* = swimming, *Br* = burrowing, and *Wb* = in web. Flying creatures will also have a movement rate between A (best) and E (worst).

HIT DICE: This is the number of 8-sided dice rolled to determine the monster's hit points. Because the creatures in this book are all unique, a specific number of hit points follows each entry in parentheses. Hit Dice ratings are used to calculate attack and saving throw numbers.

THAC0: This is the creature's attack roll when attacking someone with Armor Class 0. Where magical weapons or exceptional strength provide special bonuses to a creature's chance to hit, the modified THAC0 is listed parenthetically

NO. ATTACKS: This listing indicates the number of times that the monster can strike in the typical combat round. This value may change due to magic (*haste* or *slow* spells, for example) or in unusual situations.

DAMAGE/ATTACK: This shows the potential damage inflicted by the creature's attacks. The damage spread is listed first, followed by the dice combination rolled to determine the exact damage for a specific attack—for example: 3–18 (3d6).

SPECIAL ATTACKS: This quickly notes things like dragon's breath, poisonous stings, and other unusual combat abilities. Details are provided in the **Combat** section of the entry.

SPECIAL DEFENSES: This is a brief listing of the creature's special resistances and invulnerabilities. Details are presented in the **Combat** section of the entry.

How To Use This Book

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MAGIC RESISTANCE: This is a base chance that any spell cast upon the creature will fail. If the magic resistance is defeated, the creature is still entitled to normal saving throws.

SIZE: This lists the general category into which the creature falls. The exact size of the creature will be listed in parentheses after the category is given.

T	Tiny (2' or less)
S	Small (2+' to 4')
M	Medium (4+' to 7')
L	Large (7+' to 12')
H	Huge (12+' to 25')
G	Gargantuan (over 25')

MORALE: This is a general rating of the monster's bravery in the face of an enemy.

2–4	Unreliable
5–7	Unsteady
8–10	Average
11–12	Steady
13–14	Elite
15–16	Champion
17–18	Fanatic
19–20	Fearless

XP VALUE: This is the experience point reward for defeating (though perhaps not killing) the monster. This value can be adjusted based on the situation and the tactics employed by the creature. Many of the creatures will have higher-than-normal experience points for a monster of that type due to magical weaponry, high hit points, or other special features.

COMBAT: This section of the monster's description details its actions and tactics in combat.

HABITAT/SOCIETY: This entry provides details about the monster's behavior, nature, and lifestyle. In this particular compendium, it also includes details of the creature's history and notes on its personality.

ECOLOGY: This section mentions the ways in which the creature interacts with its environment.

ADVENTURE IDEAS: Because these are unique creatures, each is accompanied by a quick synopsis of one or more possible adventures involving that nonplayer character/monster. Dungeon Masters will find these ideas useful when incorporating these monsters into their AD&D® games.

Children of the Night

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There is a tendency in Ravenloft adventures to focus only on the lords of the various domains. When a group of heroes enters the forests of Barovia, they expect to run afoul of the machinations of Strahd Von Zarovich. Should their travels bring them into the wilds of Kartakass, they gather wolfsbane and stand ready to face the challenge of Harkon Lukas and his lycanthropes.

While this certainly makes for an exciting adventure, it does tend to limit the scope of the Dungeon Master's imagination. In addition, the lord of a domain tends to be a very powerful creature. Lower-level adventurers are sometimes hard-pressed to meet the challenges presented by such encounters.

Thus, this book deals not with Ravenloft's lords, but with many of the other evil creatures that dwell amid the mists. None of the fiends presented in this book is the master of his or her own domain, although many are connected in some way to those most evil of Ravenloft's inhabitants.

Variations on a Theme

One of the subjects that the RAVENLOFT® design team spends an awful lot of time talking and writing about is the fine art of refereeing a RAVENLOFT game. We write articles about it for DRAGON® magazine and POLYHEDRON® newszine and spend an incredible amount of time answering questions and hosting seminars about it at conventions. We offer hints on designing adventures and creating the horror mood, and we listen to the comments of our fans.

We encourage people to pay attention to the creation of unique villains. While this certainly applies to the most powerful of creatures, like the lord of a domain, it also holds true for lesser characters. After all, no two player characters will ever be exactly alike—why shouldn't the same be true for the monsters they face?

The creatures in this book can be divided into the following three general categories.

Old Familiar Faces

In this product, some of the monsters presented are based upon existing AD&D® game creatures. Some are drawn from the pages of previous *Monstrous Compendium* appendices and some from earlier RAVENLOFT adventures and supplements.

In every case, however, the monster has been given a unique background and motivation that sets it apart from the others of its ilk. In the first RAVENLOFT *Monstrous Compendium* appendix, for example, statistics were presented for the vile ermordenung. In this book, we explore the secret origins of Nostalia Romaine, the first of the deadly ermordenung to be created and certainly the most evil of their kind.

Newly Recognized Terrors

Some of the other creatures in this book are unique examples of races that have not been previously defined. For example, you'll be introduced to the Voodan, a mysterious offshoot of humanity that may well be distantly related to the Vistani. The statistics presented in this book are those of a single individual but can certainly serve as a model for Dungeon Masters who might wish to add other Voodan to their campaigns.

Freaks and Outcasts

The last type of entry in this particular appendix is the unique creature. These individuals are exemplified by entries like the Living Brain or the horribly cursed Jacqueline Montarri. Thankfully, there is only one of each such creature in existence, for they are terrible indeed. These entries can be the most interesting of all to run in a campaign because players won't know what it is that they are encountering.

There seemed a strange stillness over everything; but as I listened I heard as if from down below in the valley the howling of many wolves. The Count's eyes gleamed, and he said:—

"Listen to them — the children of the night. What music they make!"

Dracula
Bram Stoker

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A Final Note From the Author

For the past few years, we've invested an awful lot of time and effort into making the RAVENLOFT® game the success that it is. We've gone to conventions around the country and overseas in hopes of finding out what our customers want to see in our products. Indeed, the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set that Bruce Nesmith and I wrote was almost totally based on the questions and comments that we received in our travels.

Many people have said some very kind things to us, and we'd like to thank them because that's the sort of thing that keeps you going in this business. Others have taken the time to point out the things we did wrong or forgot to do at all. Again, that's a pretty valuable service because it keeps us honest and on our toes. Lastly, there were those few who didn't like our RAVENLOFT products at all. Well, that's okay, too. After all, if everyone loved them, we wouldn't be motivated to make them better.

Recently, I've encountered a new bunch of fans thanks to the wonders of modern computer technology. One of the more interesting things that TSR is involved with is GEnie, a computer network run by the good folks at General Electric. They were kind enough to set up an area on-line for TSR gamers. There's even an electronic branch of the RPGA® Network, and on-line gaming conventions!

In any event, that's who this product is dedicated to: the staff, regulars, and even casual attendees of The Red Dragon Inn on the GEnie computer network. You're a good bunch of guys and gals to bounce ideas off of and run playtests with.

Oh well, the mists are rising. Let's see what's lurking in them tonight, shall we?

William W. Connors

Suggested RAVENLOFT Monsters from recent *Monstrous Compendiums*

MC11, FORGOTTEN REALMS® Appendix II

Bat, Deep
Cat (all)
Harrla
Inquisitor
Lhiannan Shee
Manni
Naga, Dark
Orpsu
Phantom
Plant, Carnivorous (Black Willow)
Skuz
Tempest

MC12, DARK SUN® Appendix

Banshee, Dwarf
Beetle Agony
Bog Wader
Dune Runner
Elemental (all)
Golem (all)
Id Fiend
Plant, Carnivorous (all)
Sand Bride
Thrax
Zhackal
Zombie Plant

MC13, AL-QADIM® Appendix

Ammut
Black Cloud of Vengeance
Copper Automaton
Ghost Mount
Ghul, Great
Heway
Living Idol (all)
Lycanthrope, Werehyena
Lycanthrope, Werelion
Rom
Serpent, Winged
Silats

MC14, FIEND FOLIO® Appendix

Apparition
Coffer Corpse
Dark Creeper
Dark Stalker
Grimlock
Hellcat
Iron Cobra
Mephit (all)
Penanggalan
Phantom Stalker
Sheet Ghoul/Sheet Phantom

Brain, Living (Rudolph Von Aubrecker)

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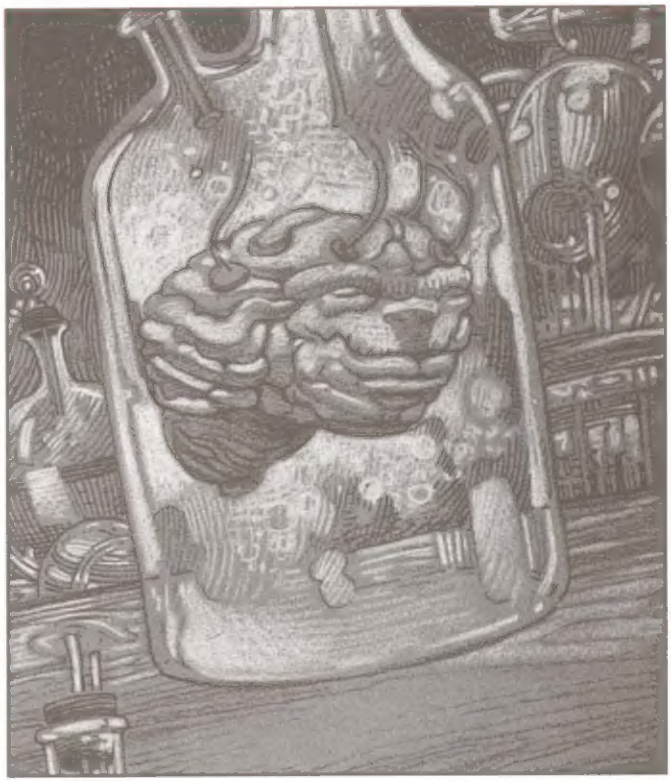
CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Dementlieu (Port-a-Lucine)
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Supra-genius (20)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	Special
HIT DICE:	1 (8 hp)
THAC0:	19
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	See below
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	See below
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	See below
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	Tiny (about 8" diameter)
MORALE:	Average (9)
XP VALUE:	975



The Living Brain is a horrible result of Victor Mordenheim's early experiments in the creation and artificial sustenance of life. Like many of his other projects, the gods looked upon this as a violation of their sacred tenets. Mordenheim has long since forgotten this experiment, but the evil that he created on that stormy night years ago lives on in the Demiplane of Dread.

Externally, the Living Brain looks exactly as one might expect of a disembodied brain. The only difference that might be noticed by a careful and knowledgeable observer is an unusual enlargement of the frontal lobes and a "capping off" of the brain stem by a network of cells not unlike those that generate and store an electric eel's shocking attack.

In order to remain alive, the brain must be maintained at a temperature of between 95° and 105° Fahrenheit. Further, it must remain immersed in a nutritive saline solution which is artificially oxygenated by means of a mechanical pump. This fluid (and thus the brain itself) is contained in a thick glass jar.

The vessel which holds the brain is connected by a pair of thick conduits to a two-foot-wide cube that contains the apparatus which keeps it alive. Inside the sealed black cube is the pumping machine that circulates the solution upon which the brain depends for life. There is no known power source associated with this mechanism; many sages speculate that Mordenheim was actually able to create a perpetual motion machine for his experiment. If this is indeed the case, the secret behind such a wondrous device has been lost during Mordenheim's descent into madness.

The brain is able to communicate with any sentient creature (that is, any being with low Intelligence or better) by means of a limited telepathy. This transcends language barriers but allows only the most simple of concepts to be conveyed. Although the brain is able to take control of others via its terrible psychic powers, it is unable to converse with those it dominates. Attempts have been made by Mordenheim and others to construct speech machines for the brain, but these have always failed. When communication is vital to its plans, the brain simply uses its mental powers to dominate someone and then speak through that person.

Combat: Obviously, the Living Brain is utterly helpless in all physical matters. However, the isolation of this terrible organ from all physical concerns has enabled it to focus wholly on its mental powers. Further, the addition of various chemicals to the nutrient bath and the mild electrical current running through the solution which houses the brain have stimulated its development. Combined, these factors make the brain one of the most dangerous creatures in Ravenloft.

The actual appearance of the brain can give characters quite a shock. While the sight of a brain floating in a jar is probably not enough to inspire fear or horror in the average adventurer, the realization that the brain is a living, sentient thing is far more unsettling. At the DM's discretion, anyone who has the true nature of the Living Brain thrust upon him or her might well be required to make a fear, horror, or even madness check.

The primary weapon of the brain is a simple bolt of mental energy that does damage based on the Intelligence of the victim. Because the attack turns the target's

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own mind against itself, creatures with lower intelligences are far less vulnerable to it. Against highly intelligent creatures, however, the attack can be devastating. When employing its mental blast, the brain must make a normal attack roll. The "Armor Class" of the victim is determined not by armor worn but by the mental fortitude, or Wisdom, of the target. This mental Armor Class is assumed to begin at 10, just as normal Armor Class does. However, every 3 full points of Wisdom provides a –1 reduction to this base. Thus, a character with a Wisdom of 15 has a mental Armor Class of five (15÷3=5; 10–5=5). Obviously, Dexterity will not modify the mental Armor Class of a target. At the Dungeon Master's option, however, other factors might. Any psionic defense mode will double the natural Wisdom bonus if employed.

Once a target has been hit by the mental attack, the damage inflicted by the attack is determined by rolling dice. The damage done varies according to the target's Intelligence, as indicated in the following chart:

Intelligence	Damage Done
Non- (0)	Nil
Animal (1)	1d4
Semi- (2–4)	1d6
Low (5–7)	1d8
Average (8–10)	1d10
Very (11–12)	2d6
High (13–14)	2d8
Exceptional (15–16)	2d10
Genius (17–18)	3d8
Supra-genius (19–20)	3d10
Godlike (21+)	4d10

Both the various psionic defense modes, magical spells like *mind blank*, and certain magical items will provide protection from this attack.

In addition to this simple attack, the Living Brain is able to employ special mental powers that mimic a number of magical spells. Three times per day it may duplicate the effects of a *charm person*, *command*, or *sleep* spell. Twice per day, the brain may employ *forget*, *hold person*, and *suggestion*. Once per day, the foul thing may also make use of *demand*, *domination*, *emotion*, or *mass suggestion*. In all cases, normal language requirements are waived for the purposes of the brain's special abilities, and all powers are employed as if by a 15th-level wizard. All normal ranges for these abilities are waived as well, as they are assumed to function within a 50-foot radius around the brain.

The brain maintains a low-level empathic field at all times. Because this aura senses any aggressive intent within 50 feet, it is impossible for anyone to achieve surprise when attacking the brain from within this range. This field also enables the brain to estimate the Intelligence, character class, and experience level of anyone entering it with great precision.

In addition to this rudimentary defense, the brain can invoke a *protective shell* three times per day. This shell combines the effects of both a *globe of invulnerability* and a *wall of force*, making it a most effective defense.

Even if its mental defenses are somehow bypassed or negated, the brain is not utterly without protection. While it is helpless to ward off any physical attack, the Living Brain regenerates 1 hit point per round so long as it is immersed in its fluid bath.

Habitat/Society: The Living Brain was once Rudolph Von Aubrecker, youngest son of the political ruler of Lamordia. The boy had grown up in the pampered lifestyle that one associates with nobility and was by all accounts a spoiled brat. While not truly evil, he was extremely selfish and spiteful.

When Rudolph turned 18, he decided to celebrate with a week of shameless debauchery aboard his caravel, the *Haifisch*. As the revelers descended into drunken stupor, a fierce storm blew in from the Sea of Sorrows. Without a capable crew to respond to the deadly gale, the *Haifisch* was hurled against the rocky coast and shattered. There were no survivors—or so it seemed.

In actuality, Rudolph's still-living body was found by a young man named Alexis Wilhaven, a young medical student who at the time was studying under Doctor Victor Mordenheim. Wilhaven carried the body to nearby Schloss Mordenheim for emergency medical care. Despite their best efforts, however, it became clear to the doctor that there was no hope for the dying young Aubrecker.

At this point in his life, Mordenheim was deeply involved in the first stages of his experiments into the origins of life. He was particularly interested in studying the problem of brain tissue degeneration and decided to remove the man's brain prior to the death of the body and try to keep it alive in a tank. When Mordenheim told Wilhaven of his intent, the young man was horrified. He argued with the doctor, trying to dissuade him from the experiment. In the end, however, Mordenheim was able to calm his assistant's fears enough to obtain his reluctant cooperation for the delicate operation.

As the storm raged outside, the pair did their butchers' work and then destroyed the body. Despite Wilhaven's pleas, Mordenheim made no effort to inform the Baron about his son's true fate. Instead, he allowed the old man to believe that his youngest boy was simply lost at sea.

Mordenheim placed the brain in a glass container which he had filled with a saline solution. He circulated and aerated the fluid with a pump that was driven by a simple battery of his own design. Over the course of the next few weeks, he studied the brain and did all that he could to sustain it.

Horrified at what he had done, Wilhaven planned to

Brain, Living (Rudolph Von Aubrecker)

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leave Schloss Mordenheim and take word of the doctor's madness to the Baron. Before leaving, he made a final impassioned plea to Mordenheim, demanding that he destroy the brain and end this blasphemous experiment. Not only did he fail to convince the scientist, he found himself swayed by Mordenheim's own assertion that he was as deeply involved in the experiment as the doctor himself. Struck by the seed of truth in this argument, Wilhaven realized that he would be judged just as harshly as Mordenheim should news of his son's fate ever reach the Baron's ears. Reluctantly, Wilhaven agreed to remain with Mordenheim and see the experiment through to its end.

Eventually, it became clear that the brain was not only living, but aware. Mordenheim began to make attempts at communication with the brain. He built all manner of mechanical devices that he hoped would enable the brain to speak. At one point, he even hoped to establish some manner of psychic contact with the thing and connected the brain directly to a trickle current of electricity to give it more energy for psychic communication. Lacking any real training in or understanding of psionics, however, he failed yet again and abandoned this effort.

When Mordenheim despaired of communicating with the brain, he began to lose interest in it. He had learned all he felt he needed to know about the degeneration of tissue, for he had not only halted the brain's decay but reversed it. The brain was actually growing in some ways, for the frontal lobes had become unusually swollen and a new membrane had closed off the severed brain stem.

Mordenheim decided that it was time to end this experiment and get on with his other work, to disconnect the brain's life-support systems and let it die the natural death he had denied it nearly a year earlier. To his horror, he found that he could not destroy the brain. His every effort in that direction met with failure as he either lost his resolve or found that his body simply refused to obey his will. Indeed, the thing seemed to have acquired the ability to control him.

As weeks and then months passed, Mordenheim found himself building a new pumping mechanism to support the brain. He would spend hours laboring away with no idea what his final goal was. Only the brain, with its intelligence boosted by side effects from Mordenheim's experiments, knew what the device would do when completed. After nearly half a year of labor, Mordenheim put the finishing touches on a life support system that appeared to be fully self-contained.

Then, less than a week after he had finished this device, the brain and all its supporting equipment vanished, as did young Wilhaven. It didn't take the doctor long to deduce that the boy had fallen under the brain's spell just as he had. While Mordenheim was forced to construct the brain's mechanism, Wilhaven must have been directed to plan the brain's departure from remote Schloss Mordenheim to some other location.

Mordenheim made inquiries, attempting to discover what had happened to the sinister thing that he created, but was able to learn only that a man matching the description of his young assistant had been seen in the harbor at Ludendorf, directing the placement of several large crates aboard a ship bound for Dementlieu. The man had then boarded the ship, which left the harbor and sailed into the mists that roll eternally across the surface of the Sea of Sorrows. More than that, he was unable to learn.

Indeed, Mordenheim quickly lost interest in the affair. While he had no doubt that the brain would do evil wherever it went, he soon found himself absorbed in his own work again. Still, the scientist did not forget the lessons that he learned from this tragedy. As he began again to examine the question of life and its origins, he vowed that he would allow no future experiments to go as far astray as had this one. . . .

The process which turned Rudolph Von Aubrecker into the Living Brain gave Mordenheim's creation tremendous mental powers and a greatly increased intelligence. The brain recognizes that it can never again be a part of the human world but is little distressed by this fact. Instead, it considers itself quite superior to those "mere humans" around it, due to the ease with which it can manipulate and control them.

When it left Lamordia, the creature had great plans, desiring nothing less than the total domination of all it encountered. While it found controlling a man of Dr. Mordenheim's brilliance very taxing, the doctor's young assistant proved to be a far more pliable slave. It used the youth to leave Mordenheim and Lamordia behind and seek a new land to claim for its own.

By the time its ship dropped anchor in Port-a-Lucine, the entire crew was under the brain's horrible control. Under its direction, its new lackeys quickly arranged for the purchase of an abandoned warehouse on the waterfront. Here, it ordered its hapless servants to began assembling a collection of scientific apparatus that eventually grew into a formidable laboratory.

At the same time, the Living Brain began to mentally enslave more and more people in pursuit of its long-range goal. But when it tried to take control of Marcel Guignol, the Lord Governor of Dementlieu, it discovered he was already under someone else's control, the man's mind filled with hypnotic blocks and mental suggestions—and that the sophistication of these techniques exceeded even its own powers. Looking further into the matter, it eventually deduced the identity of this mysterious rival: mesmerist Dominic d'Honaire, the lord of this domain.

In the years since its arrival in Dementlieu, the Living Brain has clashed with d'Honaire several times. The two are now hated enemies who play an incredibly subtle game of cat and mouse as they each strive to destroy the other. The fact that d'Honaire has not yet been able to

destroy his enemy is directly attributable to the cunning intelligence of Aubrecker and the care that it takes to protect itself from discovery. Further, d'Honaire has never seen the Living Brain and does not yet understand the nature of his enemy. Indeed, the lord of Dementlieu is fairly certain that he opposes a man who, like himself, is a master of the hypnotic arts. That his enemy might be the result of an unhallowed operation by a brilliant mad scientist in another land has not occurred to him.

The brain has created a network of informants, most of whom do not realize the nature of the thing they serve. Thus, although they frequently refer to their hidden master as "The Brain," they have no idea that this is anything other than a nickname. So extensive is the intelligence network set up by the Living Brain that it knows almost everything that happens in the domain nearly as soon as d'Honaire himself does.

The Living Brain has several lairs in the waterfront district of Port-a-Lucine, Dementlieu's largest city, and can easily be moved to a place of hiding on short notice. Its main base of operations, secured with the help of young Wilhaven and the crew of the ship that carried it out of Lamordia, is an old warehouse building indistinguishable from the many other such edifices in this part of the city.

Inside, crates and barrels fill the large structure to the roof, and laborers seem to be always at work bringing in new cargoes and hauling out old ones. In actuality, these poor creatures are totally under the control of the brain and spend their entire lives moving things from one place in the building to another. If the brain is ever attacked, these men form its first line of defense. Each of them is nothing more than a 1st-level fighter, but there are upwards of 20 available at any time.

Behind the warehouse and connected to it by both a narrow alleyway and a secret underground tunnel is an old two-story house. This smaller building is used as a home by the brain's most important minions. These are people who know the true nature of the creature they serve and act willingly on its behalf. To the outside world, they are the owners and operators of the warehouse. In actuality, they are murderers and assassins. They have been permitted to retain their free will only because the brain has searched their minds and found their loyalty to be beyond question.

Below the warehouse, in a secret sub-basement whose very existence is known only to a trusted few, lies the Living Brain's lair and laboratory.

Ecology: The Living Brain is free of the burdens imposed upon natural creatures. It has no need of food, save for the nutrients that are carried in its fluid bath, or most other biological requirements. It does require sleep, however, for only in dreams can it experience the physical sensations it requires to remain sane.

Although the pumping mechanism and electrical generator that keep the brain alive are perpetual and have no need of recharging or, at least to date, repair, its is not an utterly closed system. As the disembodied brain extracts chemicals and nutrients from the solution in which it floats, the mixture must be replenished. While the brain itself is unable to do this, this simple task is one that it can easily command any of its minions to do. The procedure takes one hour, during which period the brain is effectively helpless and comatose. During this time, player characters might be entitled to a saving throw to escape the brain's influence over them. Few, if any, NPCs should gain such a saving throw, however, as the brain's hold over a minion strengthens with time.

Young Wilhaven, the poor lad who found the body of the dying Aubrecker, has become the absolute slave of the Living Brain. Years of mental domination by the fiend have left the man's soul a desiccated husk. When the brain is not directly instructing him to act in some way, he generally sits listlessly looking out over the Sea of Sorrows. From time to time, a tear rolls from his eye—the result of some lingering fragment of his personality? Or merely a speck of dust carried in the air? None can say.

Adventure Ideas: The inherent dichotomy of d'Honaire and the Living Brain is a natural source of drama, one which places the player characters squarely in the middle of the endless struggle between the Living Brain and its rival, Dominic d'Honaire. Furious at his inability to root out and destroy this enemy, the master of Dementlieu arranges a meeting with a group of adventurers (that is, the PCs).

Through mundane or macabre means, d'Honaire convinces them to seek out and destroy his enemy. His own assumption that his foe is nothing more than a man, albeit a talented and intelligent one, will no doubt be passed on to the players. As they look deeper into the matter and the true nature of the Living Brain becomes apparent to them, they find themselves facing something far more horrible than anything they might have imagined. Even if they fail to destroy Aubrecker, d'Honaire would be very interested in learning that his enemy is a disembodied monster.

This scenario could easily be reversed, with the PCs being hired through one of the brain's agents to investigate the secret master of Dementlieu. As they explore the mysterious land, they discover the intricate web of deceit and hypnosis that d'Honaire has sown about the domain. Having run afoul of his plans, they might well find themselves forced to seek protection from their mysterious patron, only to discover its horrifying true nature.

Ermordenung (Nostalia Romaine)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Borca
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (12)
TREASURE:	W (I)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	4 (27 hp)
THAC0:	17
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–5 (1d4+1)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Poison; charm
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to poison
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5′ 11″)
MORALE:	Fanatic (17)
XP VALUE:	1,400

Nostalia Romaine is the head of Ivana Boritsi's dreaded ermordenung. She is as evil as she is ravishing, and utterly loyal to her evil mistress. A series of elixirs keeps her eternally young and maintains her alluring beauty, which is perhaps her most deadly weapon.

Like all ermordenung, Nostalia is in perfect physical condition. Slender and elegant, she moves with the grace and agility of a dancer. She stands just under six feet in height, with crisp dark eyes that stand out from the unnaturally pale complexion of her skin. Her ebony hair, which she wears in a thick braid, falls almost to her knees. She often decorates herself by braiding flowers into her hair, selecting blooms that are both beautiful and poisonous. Nostalia carries a slender jewelled dagger on her hip but employs no other armor or weapons. She always wears long, elegant gloves, removing them only when preparing to kill someone,with her poisoned touch.

Nostalia speaks the language of Borca, as well as that of several neighboring domains. Her aristocratic tones come across clearly, whatever the language.

Combat: Like all ermordenung, Nostalia has the ability to kill with her touch. Because her body has been infused with deadly toxins, the slightest unprotected contact with her exposed skin is deadly. In combat, a normal attack roll is required for her to touch exposed skin. Anyone touched must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison (with a +4 bonus) at once. Those who fail their saves succumb instantly to her deadly touch. Those who make their saves suffer 10 points of damage.

A natural roll of 20 on the attack indicates that Nostalia has gotten a firm grip on her enemy. When this happens, the victim must make an unmodified Saving Throw vs. Poison: failure indicates instant death, while a successful save results in the loss of 20 hit points. If the victim is unable to break her iron grip, a new save must be made again on each subsequent round.

In noncombat situations, Nostalia strikes by luring male victims into a deadly embrace. Her natural charisma, intoxicating beauty, and seductive manner makes this a simple task in most cases; in addition, her deep, husky voice acts as a *charm* spell. Once she has taken her victim into her arms, she delivers a passionate, and utterly deadly, kiss. Anyone kissed by Nostalia must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison (with a –4 penalty to the roll) or be instantly slain. Success at the saving throw results in a mere 30 points of damage. Anyone caught in the ermordenung's embrace who fails to break free will be kissed again on the next round.

Breaking away from Nostalia is not an easy task. Like all ermordenung, she has a Strength score of 18/50. Anyone whose Strength score is lower must make a Saving Throw vs. Paralysis (again, at a –4 penalty) in order to pull away. Persons of equal strength must succeed on an unmodified roll; those who are stronger gain a +4 bonus.

When she opts not to use her natural attacks, Nostalia strikes with her bejewelled dagger. This is her preferred means of attacking female victims, for she finds the touch of other women repulsive. This weapon is actually a *dagger of venom* which she keeps filled with a solution mixed from her own blood. Anyone stabbed by this +1 weapon must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison with a –4 penalty or die instantly (success on the save means

Ermordenung (Nostalia Romaine)

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that the toxin was not injected). The dagger holds enough poison for six attacks.

Nostalia's system is so infused with deadly toxins that she herself is immune to almost any manner of poisonous attack. The only toxin to which she is vulnerable is the touch of another ermordenung.

Habitat/Society: Nostalia was born near the city of Levkarest in Borca. Her parents were aristocrats, loyal followers of the dread Camille Dilisnya, the lord of the domain at that time.

As a young girl, Nostalia and Ivana Boritsi were close friends. When Ivana, who was the elder by some two years, began to plan her ascension to the throne of Borca, Nostalia was her loyal assistant and confidant. Nostalia had no great dislike of Camille, but her devotion to Ivana was such that she would do anything her friend asked of her.

When Ivana perfected her mysterious method of toxic infusions that she believed would grant the recipient a poisoned touch at will, she asked Nostalia to be the first to receive this dire and deadly gift. Nostalia agreed and underwent the horrible transformation. As the process was completed, she fell into a coma and remained all but lifeless for a fortnight. When she awoke at last, she was an ermordenung, the living embodiment of venom.

The first act that Nostalia was called upon to undertake as an ermordenung was the destruction of Ivana's mother, Camille. Ivana planned to poison her mother, just as Camille had poisoned so many others, and Nostalia would be her weapon.

On a warm, bright day some two weeks after she had completed her transformation, Nostalia went to visit the unsuspecting monarch in her chambers in the Boritsi Manor. Here, she professed her loyalty and love, saying that she had come to warn her monarch about Ivana's foul plot to assassinate her and usurp the domain. Even now, Nostalia warned, a group of hired thugs were on their way to Camille's chambers to murder her, unless she fled immediately. Camille believed her story and, hearing noises outside that sounded like a mob breaking down the outer door, panicked and fled through a secret passage with Nostalia.

Together, the two women navigated the dark, narrow, cobweb-filled tunnels within the manor's walls, emerging at last in the coachhouse, where a magnificent coach stood, a team of fine horses and a driver in hat and greatcoat at the ready. Nostalia explained that this conveyance would carry Camille to safety in Levkarest, where she could rally her supporters and return to reclaim her throne.

But when the grateful matriarch ordered the coachman to open the carriage door, the supposed servant suddenly removed hat and cloak to reveal—Ivana's face. As Camille turned to her companion, her face pale with shock and horror, Nostalia stepped forward with a smile and kissed the older woman, who crumpled dead at her feet to the sound of Ivana's cruel laughter.

Ever since that time, Nostalia has found herself haunted by the face of the woman she betrayed and killed. Nightmares in which Camille Dilisnya rises up as a ghost to destroy her are not uncommon. Nostalia is unable to escape the feel of Camille's lips on her own, even when she kisses another. For this reason, Nostalia loathes the touch of female flesh. While she will gladly use her poisonous embrace to destroy men, she is sickened by the thought of actually touching another woman. As such, she depends upon her *dagger of venom* when Ivana orders her to assassinate a woman.

She soon found herself at the head of a growing clan of ermordenung. Although there were fewer than half a dozen of the deadly creatures in those early days, it quickly became clear that their usefulness to the lord of the domain would lead to the creation of more. Gradually, Ivana began to place more and more power in the hands of her deadly childhood friend.

In the years that have passed since that time, Nostalia has grown detached. She no longer feels any remorse over her deeds and has come to savor the pain and suffering that she brings to others.

Ecology: Like all ermordenung, Nostalia Romaine is deadly to all that she touches. As such, she can never take a lover, marry, or raise children. While she claims to hold such things in contempt and boasts that she holds no desire for them, the intimacy that is denied her gnaws at her soul.

For several years now, Nostalia has been employing an elixir that prevents her from aging. Only she knows the secret ingredients of this concoction, though it is believed to require the "harvesting" of no fewer than three young men. Nostalia must create and consume a new draught each month or her aging will resume at a greatly accelerated rate.

Nostalia is Ivana Boritsi's closest advisor and has a great deal of influence in the selection of new ermordenung. As such, she is often thought of as the mother of that race, despite the fact that she had no part in actually devising the formula that made her what she is today.

Adventure Ideas: Nostalia's vanity and hunger for eternal youth is a fine source for adventures. She might easily be encountered while investigating some new tonic or elixir. Further, the "harvesting" of young men for her monthly draught of youth might well bring her to the attention of the heroes.

Ghoul, Ghast (Jugo Hesketh)

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Tepest
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Corpses
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11)
TREASURE:	Q, R, S, T (B)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	15
HIT DICE:	4 (24 hp)
THAC0:	17
NO. ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–4 (1d4)/1–4 (1d4)/1–8 (1d8)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Paralysis
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Stench
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' 3" tall)
MORALE:	Elite (13)
XP VALUE:	650

Long ago, Hesketh was a senior priest in the cult of the false god Zhakata led by Yagno Petrovna, the lord of G'henna. As Petrovna's chief Inquisitor, among his horrid duties were dreadful acts of torture and sacrifice; secretly, he practiced cannibalism on the corpses of his hapless victims. Over the years, these unholy practices warped his soul and, upon his death, transformed him into an undead fiend.

Prior to his demise, Hesketh was a tall, slender man. He had sparse black hair and piercing dark eyes that seemed to look deep into the hearts of those he met. He was congenial and polite, if inwardly sinister, and quite possibly the most charismatic man in G'henna.

The accident which claimed Hesketh's life and the terrible transformation to undeath has left his appearance greatly altered. His skin, now dried and mummified, has drawn tight over the bones and turned a sickly grey-green. His fingernails are long and black, taking on the appearance of dreadful claws. His tongue has grown long and rasp-like, perfect for drawing the marrow out of bones. Hesketh's eyes gleam in the dark with a searing red not unlike the glow of a burning ember; his teeth are sharp, black, and utterly deadly.

Whatever languages Hesketh knew in life have been forgotten in death. He communicates with the ghouls that follow him through guttural grunts and growls. It might be possible to speak to Hesketh with magical means, but this is mere speculation; to date, no one has tried—no one who survived, at any rate.

Combat: While much of Hesketh's brilliant intellect has been lost, he retains a cruel and deadly cunning. When he attacks, he does so savagely, with tooth and claw. Each of his two claw attacks does 1d4 points of damage; the horrible bite does 1d8 points. Anyone injured by Hesketh must make a Saving Throw vs. Paralysis or be unable to move for 5–10 (1d4+6) rounds. This affects all humans and demihumans, including elves. A priest can free anyone stricken with this curse by means of a *remove paralysis* spell.

As a ghast, Hesketh gives off a foul odor of rotting flesh. Anyone who comes within 10 feet of him must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison or become so ill that he or she suffers a –2 penalty at all attack rolls for the duration of the combat.

Hesketh is not without his vulnerabilities. He can be harmed by any weapon, be it magical or mundane, and weapons forged of cold iron will inflict double damage with each hit. He can be turned by clerics of high enough level (at least third) and can be held at bay with a *protection from evil* spell so long as powdered iron is used in its casting.

Hesketh leads a band of common ghouls, and he is seldom encountered without 1–4 of these loathsome creatures in his company.

Any human or demihuman slain by Hesketh will become a ghoul; only if the body is *blessed* is this horrible fate averted. If the victim is *raised* or *resurrected* without being *blessed*, he or she will rise at once as a ravening ghoul. Of course, if the body is destroyed—for example, if Hesketh and his associates eat their victim—it cannot become a ghoul.

Hesketh is immune to all manner of *sleep* and *charm* spells. Poisons and diseases cannot harm him, and the

Ghoul, Ghast (Jugo Hesketh)

dark powers have even granted him immunity to the touch of holy water.

Habitat/Society: Jugo Hesketh was, in life, a high-ranking priest in the service of Yagno Petrovna, the lord of G'Henna. Jugo Hesketh was the first man Petrovna encountered when he first left Barovia and entered G'henna in 702. The two became friends, primarily because of Petrovna's *charm* ability, and worked together to forge the cult of Zhakata. They spent months travelling through the newly formed domain, gathering loyal followers to their false religion. Once the cult was well-established, Yagno installed his trusted lieutenant as its chief Inquisitor, responsible for seeking out unbelievers and doubters ("blasphemers"); many a visitor to G'Henna escaped Zhakata's altars only to wind up in the Inquisition's dungeon ("question chambers").

As the years passed, one of Hesketh's primary responsibilities was the conducting of secret and terrible rituals designed to gain the favor of the false god Zhakata. These obscene services frequently ended with gruesome acts of sacrifice and cannibalism. It is said that more than half of the pitiful mongrelmen who roamed the Outlands of G'Henna were captured and brought to a grisly death at Hesketh's hands.

Then, in 725, Hesketh met with an unfortunate mishap. He and a number of his acolyte followers were scouring the wilds around Dervich for a family suspected of blasphemy. It was Hesketh's mission to apprehend these fugitives and bring them before Petrovna for transformation into mongrelmen.

Hesketh found the family attempting to flee north into Darkon. With the aid of his servants, he captured the whole clan and threw them in chains. The prisoners were tossed into a wagon and Hesketh began to lead them back to Zhukar, where they would meet their ghastly fate.

Shortly after the conveyance passed the half-way point in the trek, it was attacked by a band of mongrelmen. They had no idea who was in the wagon, thinking only that they might find food and useful equipment. When they discovered that fate had delivered the hated Jugo Hesketh into their hands, they were ecstatic. The acolytes tried to defend their master but were torn apart by the attackers. The mongrelmen freed the chained prisoners who, it is said, managed to make good their escape into Darkon, where they lived out the rest of their days.

Hesketh, however, was not so lucky. The vengeful mongrelmen carried their prisoner deep into the heart of the G'hennan Outland, where he was slowly tortured to death. His body was then tied to a raft and set adrift upriver of Zhukar.

When the raft arrived in the city, it was empty. But the bloodstains and clothes found on it were more than enough to convince Petrovna that his friend and follower had been killed. Enraged, the lord of G'henna ordered a brutal pogrom against the mongrelmen south of the city. It is unknown how many of the pitiful creatures were killed, or how many of Yagno's own men were slain in turn, before the carnage came to an end.

In the weeks following Hesketh's death, however, reports began to arise that the bodies of the slain acolytes returned from the slaughter for burial rites were being disfigured in their crypts.

Shocked, Petrovna decided to investigate the matter for himself. Much to his horror, he discovered that the half-eaten corpses were the work of his old friend, now an undead monster. For all his sinister evils, Yagno Petrovna could not bring himself to destroy his former friend, even in the terrible form he had assumed. Instead, he drove the creature out, forcing him to flee into the wilds of Tepest.

Ecology: When Hesketh died, a terrible curse fell upon him. The origins of this curse may lie in his own taste for human flesh or in the dying oaths of his countless victims. Whatever the source, this curse saw him transformed into a foul thing of the night. Hesketh now roams the lands of Tepest, searching eternally for flesh to satisfy his unnatural hunger.

Over the years, he has created a band of dreadful undead who follow him loyally. With these sickening acolytes, he seeks out and devours the newly dead.

While Hesketh and his minions do not go forth by day, they are not injured by sunlight. They tend to make their lair in places of death where they hunt for a few weeks before moving on. Often, they leave one or more ghouls behind which must be hunted down and destroyed if evidence of their passing is to be erased.

Adventure Ideas: Hesketh and his ghouls make excellent adversaries for lower level heroes. A good scenario might involve the PCs being called upon to investigate a number of corpse mutilations or brutal murders. Because Hesketh is very cunning, he will disguise his activities as those of a madman or wild beast. Heroes investigating further will doubtless be shocked to learn the truth.

Hesketh could even be introduced following the demise of an important NPC or even a PC. As the body lies in state awaiting burial or *resurrection*, Hesketh and his ghouls could attack it. While this might be just another meal to them, it represents a great affront to the other player characters. Adventures which hit so close to home can be particularly terrifying.

If the DM wishes to make Hesketh more dangerous, he could be given some clerical spellcasting ability. In this way, he might be made suitable for use as an enemy confronting higher level adventurers.

Golem, Half- (Desmond LaRouche)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Nova Vaasa
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Highly (13)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	9
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	7 (50 hp)
THAC0:	13
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–16 (2d8) or 3–8 (1d6+2)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Nil
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapon to hit; spell immunities; regeneration
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6′ 6″ tall)
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	5,000

Both medical science and healing magic can accomplish wonders. Often, the application of a poultice infused with curative herbs or the weaving of a mystical spell can save the life of an injured or diseased person. Sometimes, however, these noble pursuits of healing can be followed too far, and a virtuous intent often ends with tragic consequences. Such was the case with an unfortunate youth named Desmond LaRouche, the dreaded half-golem.

Prior to his transformation, Desmond was a handsome young man. His eyes were a soft and gentle green that reminded his many sweethearts of cool ferns. His long sandy-brown hair was worn in a ponytail bound with a silver cord. His smile, which was quick to flash across his face and often followed by a melodic laugh, was as bright and winning as any in the land.

After that dark December night when tragedy struck, his features were drastically altered. While the right half of his body is as it was, the left is repulsive to look upon. That half of Desmond's face is now horribly scarred and has the pale grey color of death. His left eye is a sightless orb of white set in a puckered socket beneath a half-melted brow. Veins bulge out as the skin has drawn tight over the bone. His left hand is a withered remnant with long, blackened fingers and nails that curve like the claws of a great cat. It is difficult to imagine a more dreadful dichotomy than that presented by this once-handsome man. Few can look upon him without succumbing to fear and loathing.

Desmond's voice alternates between the soft tones of his past life and the harsh, guttural sounds made by the left half of his throat. He speaks only the language of Nova Vaasa and may or may not be able to read and write when encountered, depending on which part of his personality is currently uppermost.

Combat: In melee combat, Desmond has two distinct fighting styles. If his bestial self is dominant, he attacks with a savage fury equal to that of a maddened beast. If his human side has mastery of the body, he tends toward finesse and elegant weapons like the rapier and foil. In either case, he is a dangerous enemy.

At the start of any given battle, there is a 50% chance that Desmond will give in to fury and rage. When this happens, he enters a berserk state, attacking with a single-minded determination that allows him a +2 bonus on his attack rolls and delivers 2–16 (2d8) points of damage each time a blow lands. Enemies who attack him while he is in this state gain a +2 bonus on their attack rolls because of the single-minded attention he gives to smashing his target.

If Desmond is not in a killing frenzy, he will fight more traditionally, attacking with his favorite weapon, a silver rapier. This medium piercing weapon weighs four pounds and has a speed factor of 4. Desmond's rapier, *Phantom*, is magical and gains a +1 bonus on all attack and damage rolls, inflicting a total of 3–8 (1d6+2) points of damage to small or medium-sized foes and 3–10 (1d8+2) points to larger ones. Desmond's left arm has a Strength of 19, enabling him to grapple with enemies or lift heavy weights with ease. When his golem half is dominant, he is fond of using his left hand to strangle enemies or crush their bones in its vice-like grip.

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Whenever Desmond is hit by an attack or magical spell, it is important to determine whether the left or right half of his body was affected. This is done simply by rolling any die. If the result is even, the attack strikes his normal (right) side. If the number rolled is odd, the golem half of his body receives the blow. A called shot (as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide)* can be made to strike a specific side of his body.

Desmond's left side has the same vulnerabilities and advantages as a flesh golem. It can be hit only by magical weapons, and electrical attacks actually regenerate 1 hit point per die of damage that would normally be inflicted by such an attack. Fire- and cold-based attacks do no damage to Desmond's left half, but they do cause him to act as if a *slow* spell had been cast upon him for 2–12 (2d6) rounds. All other spells have no effect if they are targeted against this side of his body.

Desmond's right side is more or less normal. It can be hit with any weapon and harmed by fire, ice, electricity, and most other attacks.

The unusual biology that has resulted from this unique fusion of natural and artificial life gives Desmond a number of special abilities. Perhaps the most important of these is the fact that he regenerates very rapidly, regaining 3 hit points per round. In addition, he is immune to all manner of poisons, toxins, and disease. He cannot be *held*, *charmed*, or put to *sleep* by magical means, but these attacks will automatically turn control of his body over to his inhuman side.

If Desmond is killed, he can easily be restored to life. While he does not regenerate after death, a charge of electricity applied to his left side can restore lost hit points (as described above) and return him to life. As soon as he lives again, his natural regeneration takes over and quickly restores him to full health.

The mere sight of Desmond's face is so terrible that it might be considered a weapon. While it does not petrify or have any real magical effect, all who look upon it for the first time must make a horror check. Even those who have had the monstrous visage described to them beforehand must make this check, for no amount of secondhand information can prepare one for this terror.

Just as Desmond's biology was changed by his transformation, so too was his psyche affected. His mind is now a morass of conflicting passions, vibrant life energy, and the eternal blackness of death. Anyone who makes any manner of telepathic communication with him, either by magical or psionic means, must make a madness check (as described in the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set.) For those not using that product in their Ravenloft campaigns, treat the experience as a horror check. Anyone attempting to contact only one of his two selves will find it impossible to separate the two thought patterns.

Habitat/Society: The tragic story of Desmond LaRouche begins in the city of Kantora near the center of the domain of Nova Vaasa. His parents were the household servants of a wealthy doctor named Sir Edmond Hiregaard. They had no idea that their master was also the dreaded Malken, lord of the domain. Indeed, Hiregaard was so kind and generous an employer that the LaRouches could not conceive of him having any vices or evil intentions.

As he grew, the boy found a special place in Hiregaard's heart. Indeed, the surgeon became a second father to him. On spring days they would fly kites together in the park, letting the wind and warm sun carry away their concerns. When spring turned to summer, they would spend hours playing stickball and fishing. When Hiregaard traveled to the other cities in Nova Vaasa, he always brought back some new toy or present for the lad, and holidays were times of great celebration for Hiregaard and his servants.

Hiregaard's love for the boy grew with the youth. When young Desmond entered his teens, the good doctor took him on as an apprentice, teaching him the ways of science and the healing arts of medicine. The doctor was both amazed and delighted by the speed with which his young friend learned the lessons he taught. In no time, Hiregaard was passing along some of his less serious cases directly to LaRouche, who dispatched them with a dedication and skill that made his mentor glow with pride.

During his apprenticeship, the young LaRouche began to take notice of the true shape of society in Nova Vaasa. Although not a member of the upper class, he had been sheltered from the terrible condition of the vice-ridden masses by the kind heart of Edmond Hiregaard. When he begin to see the suffering of the common people, he was horrified. This repulsion was magnified by the recognition that he was actually one of them. He began to feel ashamed of his sheltered youth and vowed to make life better for those less fortunate than himself.

Hiregaard saw the importance of this to the young LaRouche and offered to help him begin a practice in the slums that made up large sections of Kantora. Desmond gladly accepted the sponsorship of the nobleman and set about his new career.

In no time, the names of LaRouche and Hiregaard became synonymous with compassion and caring to the people of Kantora. For nearly a year, the two physicians cured the ill, tended to the wounded, and oversaw the healthy birth of countless babies. LaRouche was happier than he had ever been in his life.

During this same year, however, the women of Kantora, especially the harlots and trollops who frequented the gambling houses of the city, began to be terrorized by a series of brutal killings. On more than one occasion, LaRouche was called upon to examine one of the mutilated corpses. Despite his medical training, these examinations sickened him.

Hiregaard brought the matter to the attention of Prince Othmar, the political ruler of Nova Vaasa. He

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hoped to receive additional guards to patrol the city and search for the murdering fiend. Instead, his pleas fell upon deaf ears. Othmar had little concern for the murders of, as he put it, "a few of the city's far too numerous Jezebels."

LaRouche took the news of Hiregaard's failure badly. He could not believe that their monarch would be so insensitive to the needs of his subjects. Finally, the young doctor decided to take matters into his own hands. If Prince Othmar would not help, then he, Desmond LaRouche, would track down the fiend himself and see him destroyed.

His mind made up, Desmond began to spend his evenings in the dark streets and alleys around the gambling houses. For nearly a week he saw nothing more than the usual beatings, violence, and corruption of the city. On the seventh night, however, he saw a sinister shape moving through the shadows of the city. Unwilling to move against the figure until he knew for certain that this was the killer, he moved to follow the suspicious-looking character.

The constant ebb and flow of people in the streets made tailing the man a difficult task. Indeed, he nearly lost sight of the fellow several times. Finally, however, he spotted the man entering a dark alley with a young dancer from one of the bawdy houses. Fearing the worst, he made for the side street, only to find the press of traffic on the streets too thick to easily penetrate.

The frantic seconds it took Desmond to reach the mouth of the alley seemed to last forever. Looking into the darkness, he saw a flash of light on the gleaming blade of a knife and heard a muffled scream. Cursing his slowness, he dashed ahead and drew his wheellock pistol.

At the end of the alley he found the murderer bent over the fallen woman. Blood flowed freely from numerous lacerations and LaRouche knew at once that this was indeed the man he had been looking for. He leveled his pistol at the fiend and called for him to drop his knife.

The murderer had been so intent on his gruesome work that he had not heard Desmond charging down the alley toward him. Now, the sudden challenge caught him off guard. He whirled about, his blade clattering to the pavement.

At that moment, the moon broke through the autumn clouds and Desmond saw the killer's face. He gasped at the sight, for the man's features were bestial and ugly, hardly human at all. The face was twisted in hate and the yellow eyes burned with a cruel fire. For a second, the dreadful face froze Desmond in his tracks. Seeing his chance, the killer charged forward and knocked him aside. Desmond crashed against the wall of a building and fell to his knees.

The killer fled into the night, never looking back. Desmond got to his feet, took aim with his pistol, and fired at the retreating figure. The murderer staggered and fell, clearly having been shot. Before the young doctor could reach him, however, he regained his feet and vanished into the maze of dark streets.

Angry at his failure to either save the woman or stop the killer, Desmond knelt beside the victim's body. In life, she had been quite lovely; a fact which made her mangled corpse all the more horrifying. He steeled himself and draped his long coat over the body. Only when this was done did he think to recover the knife that the killer had dropped.

To his horror, he recognized the weapon as a medical blade that belonged to none other than Edmond Hiregaard. Unable to accept the fact that his mentor could somehow be connected to the foul, misshapened killer he had seen, he assumed that the blade had been stolen. Pocketing the knife, he summoned the watch and reported the killing to the police.

With that taken care of, he made at once for Sir Hiregaard's house to query him as to when he had last seen the scalpel. He found the front door locked, as he expected at this late hour, and circled around to the office entrance at the side of the building. There, he saw a sight that made his blood run cold: a small pool of fresh blood lying on the stones by the door.

Before he could consider the implications of this, he heard a choking gasp of pain from inside. Without thinking, he burst in to the office where he had spent so many hours learning the healing arts.

To his horror, he saw the killer standing before him. Blood ran from his shoulder, showing quite clearly where Desmond's bullet had struck him.

Before Desmond could act to defend himself, the bestial fiend attacked. He grabbed the young doctor by the collar and hurled him into a rack of glass beakers and chemicals. Pain raced through Desmond's body as the various elixirs and fluids mingled to form a highly corrosive acid. Screaming in pain, he rolled clear of the chemicals just as they ignited and filled the room with flames and choking smoke.

Desmond assumed that this was the end of his life, for he was quickly losing consciousness and the only sensation he had in the left half of his body was a burning pain. He saw the killer clutch at his chest and fall to the floor beside him. With a detached horror, Desmond saw the bestial features of the terrible man soften and shift. Just as he fell into unconsciousness, he saw the murderer's face change to that of his beloved mentor, Sir Edmond Hiregaard.

The next several weeks of Desmond's life were spent drifting in and out of consciousness. Time passed without meaning to him, and the only thing he felt was an endless throbbing pain. Images remained in his mind, but whether they were real or hallucinations he could not say.

Finally, the young man awoke. He found that he was strapped down to a steel table in Hiregaard's operating

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theater. He was unable to move, and cold fear ran through him. After nearly an hour, he heard a door open. The brisk fall of footsteps clattered across the tiled floor, and the concerned face of Edmond Hiregaard bent over him to fill his field of vision.

Desmond was furious. He demanded an explanation and, to his surprise, Hiregaard complied. With a look of deep sorrow on his face, he confirmed the lad's worst fear: Hiregaard himself was the brutal killer Desmond had been seeking.

In his defense, Hiregaard explained that he did not commit these dreadful crimes willingly. Indeed, he claimed that his transformation into a horrible beast were the result of a most noble experiment. Hiregaard had long ago decided that human nature was the cause of all the suffering in the world. In order to make any major changes for the better, the basic nature of mankind would have to change. To that end, he began to develop a serum that would destroy the evil in men just as other medicines might destroy disease. Unwilling to risk the life of another to test the potion, he tried it on himself.

At first, it seemed to have worked. He felt like a new man, cleansed even of any evil or impure thoughts. Then, he began to suffer blackouts. For days at a time, he would have no memory of his actions. Eventually, he discovered that his evil nature had been isolated, not destroyed. From time to time, without any predictable pattern, it would surface and take complete control of his body.

Desmond listened in horror to Hiregaard's story. Instead of hatred or revulsion, he felt only pity for the tortured man. Eventually, Hiregaard brought his tale to a close with their encounter in his laboratory. He explained that his evil self, Malken, had lost control of their body as the fire spread. When he came to his senses, Hiregaard saw what had happened and was horrified. He extinguished the blaze and carried the dying Desmond into his operating theater.

The prognosis was not good. The entire left half of his body was being eaten away by the chemicals that had been splashed upon it. Even as he despaired of saving the young man's life, a horrible idea came to him. He had several fresh cadavers in the home for his experimental studies. Might they not be raided to replace the most badly-damaged parts of LaRouche's body? Desperate to save his young friend's life at any cost, Hiregaard set to work, little realizing that this ghoulish inspiration had come from the deeply buried Malken.

When his story was done, Hiregaard turned away from Desmond. In a voice heavy with sorrow, he lamented the fact that he had not allowed the young man to die as nature demanded. With that, he released the young man and presented him with a mirror. The agonized scream which escaped Desmond's lips as he looked upon his new body was the most dreadful sound Hiregaard had ever heard.

Desmond left Kantora that night. He said not a word to Hiregaard, but simply walked out of his home and into the darkness. His last memory of the man who had been a second father to him was of a frail-looking old man shaking and sobbing on the floor.

From time to time, Desmond LaRouche has considered returning to Kantora to destroy the man who made him into a monster. Inside, however, he feels that letting him live with his curse is a far crueler fate.

LaRouche has no desire to reveal Hiregaard's secret self. He recognizes the good that Hiregaard does to make up for Malken's evil and considers this to be a fair exchange.

Ecology: Desmond LaRouche now wanders the domain of Nova Vaasa. The revulsion that greets him whenever he encounters humanity has embittered him. He has been known to come to the aid of the defenseless, but generally he shuns all contact with mankind.

Desmond's unusual biology frees him from many of the concerns of daily life. He eats but one meal a day, sleeps for only an hour or so each night, and takes no notice of the hottest summer day or the coldest winter night.

Many aspects of LaRouche's life now might appeal to a druid character. He lives in the wild and, because it is his home, protects the land fiercely from those who would encroach upon it and his solitude.

Adventure Ideas: Word of a terrible man-beast stalking the countryside is generally more than enough to draw player characters from miles around. In the case of the half-golem, this sort of lure makes an excellent beginning for an adventure.

Initially the PCs might jump to the conclusion that LaRouche is evil because his form is monstrous. Because of all-too-frequent rejection, LaRouche has come to expect hostility from all he encounters. He will not initiate combat, but he will be wary of strangers. Once they prove their goodwill, his strange mix of abilities can make him a valuable ally.

Perhaps the most interesting use of Desmond LaRouche would be as a supporting character in an adventure involving Sir Edmond Hiregaard. It might be that the tortured doctor has discovered a process by which it might be possible to regenerate LaRouche's damaged half, leading Hiregaard to contact the player characters in hopes that they can track Desmond down and bring him back to Kantora.

This might indeed be the case. More likely, however, Malken has duped Hiregaard into believing that his process will work. In truth, the fiend plans to destroy LaRouche in order to protect the secret of his dual nature. After all, Desmond is the only person in Nova Vassa who knows the truth about the mysterious killer who stalks the streets of Kantora.

Golem, Mechanical (Ahmi Vanjuko)

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Vechor
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (10)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	–2
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	13 (75 hp)
THAC0:	7
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	4–40 (4d10)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Electric shock
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+2 or better weapons to hit; spell immunities; lightning aura
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (7' tall)
MORALE:	Steady (12)
XP VALUE:	15,000

Of all the tragic and misshapen creatures to survive the nightmare experiments of fiends like the wizard Hazlik or the mad butcher Markov, none is more dreadful than Ahmi Vanjuko. Once a ranger and great explorer, he has been imprisoned in a metal body powered by the sinister magic of Easan, the deranged lord of Vechor.

Prior to his transformation, Vanjuko was a strong and sturdy ranger who stood just over five and a half feet tall. His skin was a rich, earthy brown worn rough by his years of exploring the wilds of countless worlds, while his hair was coffee-colored and his eyes were the cool, crisp green of fresh mint leaves. His smile, it is said, could charm man and beast alike, while his charisma earned him the love of a thousand maidens in a hundred lands.

All that changed when Vanjuko was drawn into Ravenloft. Under the careful attention of the dark wizard Easan, his spirit has been implanted in the metal shell of a mechanical golem. Vanjuko's new body stands just over seven feet tall and looks more or less humanoid. It has long legs that might be likened to those of a bird and gangly arms that look vaguely ape-like. The arms end in three-finger gripping devices that incorporate deadly razors into each finger. Atop the cylindrical body of the machine rests a head shaped not unlike a human skull. Despite its slender, frame-like build, Vanjuko's mechanical body is far stronger than any known alloy.

Vanjuko is utterly unable to speak, although it may be possible to communicate with him via magical, clerical, or psionic means. If spoken to, he understands the Common Tongue of Oerth, the world of Greyhawk. During his travels in Ravenloft, he also learned the languages spoken in Barovia and Vechor, as well as a sprinkling of the Vistani tongue.

Combat: Vanjuko shuns humanity and has no natural enemies in the wilds of Vechor. As such, he is seldom called upon to defend himself. When he does fight, however, he is a deadly nemesis, for the mad Easan intended that his creation be a killing machine.

Like all of the mechanical golems created in Ravenloft, Vanjuko is immune to attack by weapons with less than a +2 enchantment. Similarly, he is immune to all manner of life-affecting spells (like *hold person*). He does not, however, retain the standard golem immunity to mind-affecting magics and can be charmed or the like as a normal man. He is immune to all manner of poisons and diseases. Vanjuko is vulnerable to *dispel magic*, which stuns him for a number of turns equal to the caster's level. During this time, he appears to have been slain. A *detect magic* or similar spell will reveal a magical aura lingering about the golem which grows stronger as he begins to recharge himself.

Vanjuko's primary attack is made with the retractable razor-like blades hidden in his "fingers." Each round, he is able to strike with these weapons doing 4d10 points of damage to anyone unlucky enough to be hit by them.

Any natural roll of 20 on an attack made with his razors indicates that a powerful electrical current has been shunted into the victim's body. When this happens, the victim must make a Saving Throw vs. Spells. If

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the save is failed, the victim takes 6d6 points of additional damage; a successful save results in half damage. In addition, the victim must make a Saving Throw vs. Paralysis or be incapacitated for 2d4 rounds due to muscle spasms triggered by the discharge.

Any natural roll of 20 on an attack made against Vanjuko with a metal melee weapon indicates that he has been able to channel an electrical current through the weapon and into the body of the attacker, who then suffers damage just as if he or she had been hit with the electrical attack described above. Again, a Saving Throw vs. Spells reduces damage by half, and a successful Saving Throw vs. Paralysis will allow the attacker to avoid incapacitation. The normal damage done by the attacker is unaffected.

On every third round of combat, Vanjuko can trigger a *lightning aura* that surrounds his mechanical body with a deadly electrical field. Any living creature coming within 20 feet of Vanjuko that round will be struck with numerous filaments of lightning for a total of 3d6 points of damage. A successful Saving Throw vs. Breath Weapons reduces this damage by half; no incapacitation check need be made in any case. Any exposed items carried by a character who fails his or her saving throw must save versus lightning or be destroyed.

As a ranger, Vanjuko had many useful powers and special abilities. In his new mechanical form, however, most of these have been lost. He retains the ability to cast some clerical spells, but only those he had memorized at the time of his transformation. Thus, he can use the following spells once per day: *entangle*, *pass without trace*, and *warp wood*. He casts these spells as if he were a 3rd-level cleric.

For their part, animals will have nothing to do with this unnatural construct. No creature will come within 50 feet of Vanjuko unless trained and held or calmed. Any animal, even the most devoted dog or warhorse, will refuse to come within 20 feet of him. If forced to do so, they will become violent and do whatever they must to free themselves and leave the abomination's presence.

Habitat/Society: Ahmi Vanjuko was born in the wondrous City of Greyhawk but quickly learned that urban life was not for him. Before he had reached the age of 10, he vanished into the wilds and started a new life among the animals of the green forest.

In time, he came to know every creature that shared his wilderness home with him. He learned to hunt and stalk like the wolf, to sing and play like the bird, and to lurk and pounce like the cougar. By the time he reached adolescence, the forest was very much a part of him.

One day, a strange figure came to the lands he called his own and began to build something. Although he resented this intrusion, Vanjuko took no action against this intruder. In time, the construction took the shape of an elegant manor house surrounded by a virtual wall of tangling vines laced with poisonous thorns. To anyone else, these thorns might have been a barrier. To Vanjuko, who knew the ways of the wild, they were nothing more than a challenge.

Determined to see what was going on behind this living fence, Vanjuko made his way through the thorns and into the lands beyond. To his horror, he found that the splendor of the forest had been decimated near the manor. Pools of deadly poisons littered the landscape, the plants were withering away in toxic soil, discarded trash lay everywhere, and the air carried an unnatural stench that made him retch. The animals trapped within the barrier's circuit were sick, dying, or dead.

Vanjuko vowed to see to it that the monster who had done these terrible things left the forest before it could do any more harm. Filled with righteous fury, he moved quickly to the manor's entrance and burst inside. He saw no immediate sign of the place's builder and began to search the house. At every turn, however, he was confronted with mechanical traps designed to kill unwanted intruders. In the end, these proved too deadly for him, and Vanjuko was forced to leave the building.

To his surprise, however, he found that the grounds outside had been engulfed with a rolling, macabre fog. Before he had travelled half the distance to the thorn barrier, Vanjuko was utterly lost and all but blinded by the blanket of mist. He settled down to wait for the passage of this heavy shroud. When it cleared an hour later, he found that he was no longer in his forest. Instead, he was in the domain of Kartakass.

Vanjuko began to explore the strange new land in which he found himself, hoping to uncover a way back to his native land and the forest he loved. From the domain of Harkon Lukas, he traveled north into Gundarak and then east into Strahd's own Barovia. For a time, he lived among the rustic folk of that mountainous domain, enjoying their simple way of life and learning their language.

While in Barovia, he met a young woman named Tanya, and the two fell deeply in love. She and her family were traveling performers who moved from city to city, entertaining the townsfolk before moving on. One night, Tanya came to him and told him that her people were leaving just before dawn. She kissed the ranger gently and bid him farewell, weeping at the thought that they might never meet again. Vanjuko pleaded with her to remain with him in Barovia and become his wife. She smiled, clearly tempted by the idea, but refused. Hers was the wanderer's life, she explained, and her people were the Vistani.

Despite the warnings of his newfound friends, Vanjuko decided that he would not lose the woman he loved. Shortly before sunrise, he went to the clearing where Tanya's family had camped, only to find that they had already left. He dashed off in pursuit, following their trail to the east. He caught sight of their wag-

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ons as they rolled into a bank of fog. Without pause, he spurred his horse to greater speed and dashed into the mists after them.

Emerging from the rippling vapors, Vanjuko found no trace of Tanya or her clan. Instead, he discovered that he had again been transported by the whims of Ravenloft's mists. This time, he was in the domain of Vechor. Attempting to get his bearings and learn what was going on, Vanjuko made his way to Abdok on the shores of the Nostru River. In the distance, high atop the Cliffs of Vesanis, he saw the elegant manor house where, he was told, the madman Easan lived. To his horror, Vanjuko realized that this was the same house he had seen in the wilderness of his native Oerth.

Blaming Easan for his original abduction by the mists of Ravenloft, the ranger began to plan revenge against the mad wizard. When he learned that he could not rally the people of Vechor to overthrow their foul lord, he left them and returned to his life amongst the plants and animals of the forest.

In Vechor's wilds, he found all manner of pathetic creatures which were unknown to him. The majority of these things, he learned, were the result of Easan's horrible experiments. He also learned that the mad wizard's machinations did not end with animals. He found countless species of plants, many evil and deadly, which were the result of no natural evolutionary process.

By far the most dreadful of the creatures that he encountered, however, were the twisted men and women who had survived Easan's experiments. Most were contorted and broken, tragic things known as *broken ones*. A few, however, emerged from the caverns at the base of the Cliffs of Vesanis with mechanical parts grafted onto their bodies. Most of these, thankfully, didn't live long. Those that did, Vanjuko mercifully destroyed to end their pain and suffering.

Vowing to end this madman's butchery once and for all, Vanjuko entered the labyrinth of caves and began to make his way upward to the manor house. The trek took him nearly two days, during which he fought countless creatures more terrible than any he had seen in the forests. By the time he neared the underground entrance to Easan's laboratories, he was sick with revulsion.

Steeling himself to face whatever foul things might lurk beyond, Vanjuko entered. As before, he found the place to be a maze of traps designed to keep intruders out—or perhaps to keep prisoners in. Try as he might, the ranger was no match for the terrible mechanisms and deadly spells that Easan had set up. Shortly after he began to explore the house, Vanjuko accidentally triggered the release of a cloud of toxic gas. Expecting nothing but death, he closed his eyes and collapsed.

Much to his surprise, Vanjuko awoke. He found himself strapped to a metal table in the center of a room that looked like a cross between a wizard's laboratory and a torture chamber. For a long time, he lay still and feigned unconsciousness as he looked about the place. He had hoped to spot some escape from the dreadful place, but instead he found himself speculating as to what many of the terrible devices around him might be used for. It wasn't long before he had his answer.

High overhead, two great metal spheres hung on slender poles. Without warning, a great surge of eerie blue-white light flooded the room as a steady stream of lightning began to flow between the mysterious globes. As Vanjuko watched in horror, the globes descended until they were suspended only a few feet above him. The electrical flow passing above his body crawled across his skin like stinging ants.

Then, as if from nowhere, Easan appeared. He was a short man, almost gnomish in his compact little features. His beady eyes reminded Vanjuko of the predatory gaze of a ferret. With a cruel smile, the wizard began to examine his prisoner's restraints. After a few minutes of this, Easan bent low over the ranger's face. His breath smelled like rotting fish, but Vanjuko's bonds were far too tight for him to turn away.

"Hello, my young friend," he hissed. His voice was slippery and hushed, barely audible above the cacophony of the lightning machine. "I'm so glad that you came to visit me."

Vanjuko tried to spit in the madman's face, but found that his mouth had gone dry. Easan found the gesture amusing and chuckled softly to himself. Turning away from his captive, he continued to talk while working with several arcane devices.

"For a long while, I have been planning to complete a great experiment. Time after time, I have attempted to conclude this great exploration of the soul and its ultimate origins, only to have the patient die before my work was completed. Indeed, I began to despair of ever finding someone who might have the stamina to help me draw this grand investigation to a close. Imagine my delight when I found an intruder in my own home who could survive exposure to one of my most deadly toxins. If you don't survive this experiment, I dare say that no one will."

With that, the shriveled man waddled over to a large winch and began to turn it. Slowly, a panel in the floor beside Vanjuko slid open and a second table rose out. Whatever was on the table was covered with a white sheet.

With something of a flourish, Easan swept aside the cloth and revealed a metal body that, although roughly humanoid, was a mechanical nightmare. The wizard laughed when he saw the fear fall across Vanjuko's face.

"I shouldn't worry yourself," he chuckled. "When we are finished here today, I shall have transported your soul into this metal body. You will be the father of a new race! I trust that you appreciate the honor that I'm granting you. Ah well, let's begin, shall we?"

As Easan chuckled his weasel's laugh, the metal balls began to descend again. The lightning engulfed Vanjuko

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and the mechanical corpse beside him. The ranger cried out in agony as he felt the arcane energies ripping his body apart. The pain was more incredible than anything that he could have imagined. He tried to succumb to it, hoping to lose consciousness or even die rather than endure the seemingly endless torment. As blackness rose up around him, the echoing laughter of Easan rang above the roar of the lightning.

And then it was over. Vanjuko was exhausted. The pain was gone, but so was his strength. Unconsciousness claimed him.

Vanjuko had no idea how long he swam in the blissful darkness of catatonia. Finally, he came to himself and the blackness fell away. The ranger was momentarily confused to discover that he was on a metal table. He attempted to sit up, and found that he was strapped down. Then, slowly, the memory of what had happened returned to him.

Praying that this might be some dreadful nightmare, he turned his head and looked along the length of his arm. When he saw the mechanical limb that lay there, he tried to scream. No sound issued forth from the mute metal giant that was now Ahmi Vanjuko.

Enraged, he fought to free himself from the shackles, only to find them too strong. As he thrashed about, Easan returned. He was smiling, if you could call the twisted grimace on his face a smile, and paid little attention to Vanjuko's struggles.

"Ahhhhh," he hissed, sounding almost cheerful, "Is it not as I told you?" Vanjuko tried to lunge at the wizard, but was held in check by the chains on his limbs. Easan seemed genuinely surprised by his behavior. "Don't you understand?" he asked. "I have made you immortal. More than that, I have freed you of the burdens of life. You'll never grow sick or old. You should thank me for the great gift that I have given you!"

That was more than Vanjuko could bear. He tried again to break free, and this time the chains could not restrain him. Metal fragments shattered around the chamber, and Easan sprang back in surprise. Vanjuko sprang forward, his metal body moving smoothly and flawlessly in response to his thoughts. With a great lunge and a whirring of gears, he threw himself at Easan, determined to destroy the madman. When he reached the spot where the wizard stood, however, there was nothing there but smoke. Through some magic, Easan had fled.

Vanjuko tore the laboratory apart, vowing that he would destroy the beast's lair if he could not have the beast itself. Leaving the building a burning ruin, he fled back into the tunnels and made his way back down to the forest.

Ecology: Easan has since rebuilt his home. Vanjuko has returned to living in the forest, but he no longer draws the happiness from it that he once did. All around him are vibrant living things, animals that now flee from him in terror and flowers that he can no longer smell.

As a mechanical creature, Vanjuko has no hunger or thirst and never sleeps. He lives in a cave hidden away beneath the cascade where the river Nostru tumbles off of the Cliffs of Vesanis.

Each day, he moves about the forests in a search for more products of Easan's twisted work with the black arts. He destroys them when he finds them, ending their suffering as quickly and mercifully as he can.

As mentioned in the **Combat** section of this entry, animals cannot bear the presence of Vanjuko. They recognize that he is not a natural thing and abhor him. This is perhaps the most tragic aspect of Vanjuko's life, for the love of animals meant as much to him as the embrace of his beloved Tanya.

Adventure Ideas: Vanjuko is a tragic figure. While he retains a good heart, he is bitter and angry about what has happened to him. He loathes his existence, feeling alone and alien in the world. If it were not for the fact that he feels a compulsion to destroy Easan and all his works, Vanjuko would certainly have taken measures to end his life long ago.

It is this very deep commitment to his task that can lead to excellent adventures. The people of Vechor have seen the mechanical golem moving through the woods from time to time. Not knowing its history or origins, they assume it to be evil.

Any group of heroes who come into the domain are likely to hear of the creature as well. With the villagers speaking of it as a deadly enemy, the player characters are likely to attempt to hunt down and destroy Vanjuko. If they discover the true nature of their supposed enemy, they might proceed along one of two lines.

First, they might choose to join Vanjuko and attempt to destroy Easan. Although a powerful ally in combat, Vanjuko's hulking form will make it difficult for the PCs to approach the dark lord's manor house without being seen. Vanjuko's knowledge of Easan's methods might be helpful as well. Further, he can act as a guide in the exploration of the tunnels that run from the forest to the plateau on which Easan's manor stands.

Alternately, they might begin a search for some technique which might return Vanjuko to a living body. One obvious solution might be the use of the *Apparatus*, a terrible artifact originally described in module I 10, *Ravenloft II: The House on Gryphon Hill* and most recently seen in the adventure RQ2, *Thoughts of Darkness* and the *Book of Artifacts*. With the help of this bizarre device, the player characters might be able to arrange for Vanjuko's personality to be implanted in another body. Of course, locating and recovering the artifact (which is the size of a house) will not be easy tasks. Finding a suitable body and deciding what to do with the life force that currently inhabits it might be problems in themselves.

Human, Cursed (Jacqueline Montarri)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Barovia
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Varies
TREASURE:	(F)
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	5 (20 hp)
THAC0:	15 (12) or better
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	4–11 (1d8+3)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Decapitation
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Regeneration
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	50%
SIZE:	M (5' 10" tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (19)
XP VALUE:	Varies (2,000+)

The quest for eternal youth has driven many to deeds of great heroism and terrible despair. For some, it is a noble calling that leads to the discovery of great medical advances. For others, it is an obsession that leads to the most heinous of crimes. In the case of Jacqueline Montarri, it has become the basis for a series of crimes as horrible and bizarre as any in Ravenloft's whole sordid history.

Jacqueline maintains a collection of some three dozen severed heads. She is able to remove the head she is currently wearing and replace it with one from her collection at will. Because she changes heads with every shift in her moods, her facial features are constantly changing. She no longer has her own original head, so her true appearance is long forgotten.

Jacqueline changes her clothes as frequently as she changes heads. Her vanity dictates that she wear only the finest garments, always chosen to compliment the head she is currently wearing. The only consistent feature in her attire is a ribbon of crimson velvet that she wears around her neck. Because this magical item secures her various heads to her body, she is never without it. In cases where it clashes with her clothing or chosen head, she will cover it with a scarf or other some item of jewelry for cosmetic reasons.

Jacqueline's native language is Balok, the Common Tongue of Barovia. Each of her heads knows one or more other languages, making it easy for her to communicate with almost any visitor.

Combat: Jacqueline's favored weapon is Ironfang, her *vorpal sword*. Ironfang was fashioned ages past from meteoric iron by the Drow of Arak, from whom she stole it long ago. She is able to use this weapon even when wearing the head of a wizard or other character class which might normally be unable to employ such a sword. This weapon functions in all ways as described in the *DUNGEON MASTER™ Guide*. Jacqueline has made it a practice to "harvest" new heads only with this blade.

This is not to say that she has no other weapons at her disposal. Indeed, whenever she dons a new head, she gains the class and level abilities formerly associated with it. Thus, if she opts to wear the head of a psionicist, she would gain its mental powers. In the case of spell casters, she cannot master new spells but can cast any known to the wizard or priest from whom she took the head. In each case, the spells are assumed to be freshly memorized each time she puts on the head.

The curse of eternal life under which Jacqueline lives has given her many special abilities. For instance, she regenerates lost hit points at a rate of 1 per turn, even after death. The only way in which she can be wholly destroyed is by the incineration of her original head. Because no one, not even Jacqueline herself, knows where it is hidden, she seems in little danger at present.

In addition to her regenerative powers, she is immune to any manner of poison, disease, or magically-induced paralysis. Thus, spells such as *cause disease*, *hold*, or *sleep* have no effect upon her. Spells and items that affect the mind, like a *charm* spell, affect her normally. Jacqueline is not undead, so attempts to turn her or the use of spells designed to combat such horrors have no effect upon her. These immunities are in addition to the 50%

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magic resistance which the magical energies with which she has been infused give her.

Whenever Jacqueline is called upon to make a saving throw, she does so as the class and level of the head she is currently wearing. Thus, when wearing the head of a 10th-level fighter she saves as a 10th-level fighter.

It takes Jacqueline a full round to change heads. So long as she wears her crimson ribbon, the head remains fully attached to her body—that is, it cannot be pulled or knocked off. If the ribbon is removed (it is impervious to all damage and cannot be destroyed) the head instantly rolls off and Jacqueline loses access to its powers.

Even without a head in place, Jacqueline's body is able to move and act normally; the curse she suffers enables her to see and hear (but not speak) when headless.

Habitat/Society: Jacqueline was born in the domain of Barovia some 200 years ago. She grew up in the village of Krezk, learning the craft of thieving from her parents, both of whom were master thieves, but she soon surpassed her teachers. By the time she was 16 years old, she had become one of the most skilled rogues in the domain—and one of its most beautiful women.

Like so many others of Barovian blood, Jacqueline found her beauty began to fade slightly as she entered her late twenties. Tiny lines began to appear around her eyes, and the first few white hairs showed in her raven tresses. To Jacqueline, who had been so proud of her beauty and the power it gave her over men, this change was unbearable.

In an effort to find some means of preserving her beauty, Jacqueline travelled to the Vistani compound on the banks of the River Ivlis. She sought out Madame Eva, the matriarch of Barovia's Vistani population, and begged for some means to remain eternally young and beautiful. When the old Vistani refused, Jacqueline offered to buy the secret from her, promising to steal anything that the other might need. Again, Madame Eva refused, telling Jacqueline that the secrets of the Vistani were not for sale.

This enraged the desperate thief. In a flash, she grabbed the elderly Vistani and held a knife to her throat. As a thin trickle of blood ran from Madame Eva's neck, Jacqueline demanded her help. Calmly, Madame Eva told her there was a way to ensure her beauty would never fade, but she would be wiser not to seek it. When Jacqueline insisted, the old woman said that she would find what she wanted waiting for her in the library of Castle Ravenloft.

Relief flooded through the thief from Krezk at the thought that the object of her desire was within reach. The fact that she would have to sneak into the castle of Barovia's sinister lord to gain it meant nothing to her. In order to ensure that the old woman would do nothing to betray her, Jacqueline drew the blade across Madame Eva's throat. Leaving the body behind, she slipped her knife back into its sheath and vanished into the deep Barovian night. Had she bothered to look behind her, she might have noticed an evil grin on the dying woman's face.

Jacqueline wasted no time in making her way to the ominous Castle Ravenloft. Not fully comprehending the terrors that dwelt within the great stone structure, she scaled the outer walls and crossed the parapets, entering the keep itself through the belfry. As she explored the darkened halls of the great castle and searched for the library, she failed to notice the silent shadow that haunted her steps.

At last, the thief found what she was looking for. Cautiously, she slipped into the library and began to examine the tomes and manuals that lined the walls of the great room. But as she reached out her hand to take a book from the shelves, she froze at the sound of evil laughter behind her.

Whirling, she found herself face to face with Strahd Von Zarovich. Panic-strickened, she turned and dashed for an exit, but the vampire was upon her before she had gone more than a few feet. Screaming in horror, she felt her life being drained away to satisfy the hunger of the foul master of Ravenloft. As the numbing cold of his touch spread throughout her body, blackness folded itself around her and Jacqueline lost consciousness.

When her eyes opened, she found herself in a great cage which was rocking back and forth. As her senses gradually returned, she realized that she was weak and fatigued, but that the vampire had left her alive. The cage around her proved to be mounted on a wagon which was heading down the narrow road from Castle Ravenloft to the village of Barovia.

The wagon came to a halt in the center of the town. A tall, dark man dropped down from the driver's seat and sounded a loud, mournful call on an iron horn. As the people of the village gathered around, the driver brandished a scroll. "Let it be known," he read, "that this woman was found trespassing in the halls of Castle Ravenloft. By the order of Strahd Von Zarovich, master of Barovia, she is to be put to death. Let others who might be foolish enough to consider such a course of action take heed of her fate."

With that, the man opened the cage and dragged Jacqueline out. She struggled to break free but was far too weak from the vampire's life-draining attack to offer any effective resistance. Sobbing and begging for mercy, she was forced to her knees and her head forced down onto a wooden block. As the people of Barovia watched, a great axe was brought forward and Jacqueline Montarri was beheaded.

As the silent crowds began to disperse, a representative of the Vistani stepped forward. She told the tale of Madame Eva's death and asked that the body of the thief be turned over to the murdered woman's kin. On behalf of Strahd, the driver agreed, and the Vistani

Human, Cursed (Jacqueline Montarri)

carried away the mutilated corpse.

For several days, the Vistani wove intricate magics over the corpse. Then, one week after she died, Jacqueline was restored to life.

When awareness returned to her, Jacqueline found that she was locked in the back of a great Vistani wagon. The clothes she had died in, the leather tunic and dark cotton pants that she favored when on a thieving expedition, were gone. Now, she was dressed in the wild colors and ruffles of a Vistani woman. Her hair had been drawn back and tied with a red cord, a wide band of crimson velvet encircled her neck, and the heavy odor of exotic perfumes hung thickly about her.

To her horror, Jacqueline realized that these were the same clothes Madame Eva had worn when Jacqueline killed her. There was no sign of blood upon them, but the patterns and decorations sewn on them were unmistakable.

Her mind hazy, Jacqueline tried to recall the events that had brought her to this place. She remembered her meeting with Madame Eva and her attempt to burgle Castle Ravenloft. With a shudder, she recalled her capture by Strahd Von Zarovich and the chilling touch of the vampire. Then, as a wave of cold fear swept through her, she remembered the events that followed. She saw the carriage, the executioner, and the townsfolk of Barovia. She even remembered the falling axe and the burning darkness that followed it.

Jacqueline knew that she must be dead. There was no way for her to have survived the beheading. Somehow, the Vistani must have restored her to life—but was it life? Terrified, she considered the possibility that she might now be among the ranks of the foul undead. A quick check revealed both pulse and respiration to be normal, so she tried to set aside fears that she might no longer be truly alive.

Certain that whatever fate the Vistani had in mind for her would be terrible, she decided to escape, drawing on her experience as a thief to ease open the wagon's door and slip quietly out into the night.

To her surprise, she was quite alone. There was no sign of the reception committee that she had expected to find outside the carriage. Instead, a broad clearing spread out around her. The Vistani had been here—that much was obvious from the burned-out campfires and such—but they were long gone.

Relieved, and more than a little confused, Jacqueline left the clearing behind in the event that the Vistani might return. She quickly came across the Old Svalich Road and discovered that she was not far from her home. With a lighter heart, she quickened her pace and made for Krezk.

The streets of Krezk were all but empty, and Jacqueline made her way to the front door of her home without difficulty. She slipped inside and bolted the door behind her.

Trying to forget the nightmares of the past several days, she stoked a fire and set about heating some washing water. She decided to take one last look at the outlandish Vistani dress she wore before removing the thing and burning it in the fire. She stepped in front of a silvered glass and let out a scream of terror that some say can still be heard in the back alleys of Krezk.

In the mirror, she saw the lithe figure that she was accustomed to. Her long, slender arms and legs, as fit and smoothly muscled as those of any athlete, were flatteringly accented by the gypsy costume she wore. Her face, however, was shrivelled and old. Indeed, the head upon her body was none other than that of Madame Eva.

Disgusted, Jacqueline tore off the bright clothes, ripping buttons and hooks in her haste. She pulled the cord from her hair, and found that the rolling tresses she was used to had been replaced with the wiry grey of old age.

It was only when she pulled the ribbon from her neck that the true enormity of the Vistani punishment was revealed. As soon as the crimson band fell away from her neck, the room seemed to tilt wildly around her. She had the sensation of falling and tried in vain to catch herself. When she could focus again, she saw her new head seeming to grin up at her from the floor, while above her neck she could feel nothing at all.

It is a tribute to the iron will of Jacqueline Montarri that she did not lose her sanity then and there. Instead, she tried to calm herself and learn to understand the curse that was upon her. For instance, she found that she could control her body normally even without a head. When she lifted the shrivelled head of the old Vistani and placed it upon her neck, it fell to the floor again. Only when she placed the head on her neck and bound in with the velvet ribbon did it remain secure.

When Jacqueline had at least come to accept what had happened to her, she vowed to undo the curse. She sought out the Vistani camp again and demanded to know what they had done to her. From most, her only answer was laughter and mocking.

One old woman, who claimed to be Madame Eva's daughter, deigned to speak with her. She was bitter, as one might well expect, and seemed delighted with the agony burning in Jacqueline's soul. She told the thief that her only chance to be free of the curse was to find her own head and restore it to its place. If this was done, she explained, the girl's desire for eternal youth and beauty would be granted. When Jacqueline demanded to know where her head was, the old woman only laughed and walked away. Despite the centuries that have passed since that encounter, Jacqueline has never been able to locate her original head.

In the long years that have passed since that day, Jacqueline has learned a great many things about her curse and its subtle ramifications.

The most important of these, perhaps, is that she can wear the severed heads of others as well as that of Madame Eva. Indeed, she has found that she begins to

Human, Cursed (Jacqueline Montarri)

develop terrible headaches if she wears any single head for more than three days in a row. Because of this, she has accumulated a great *library* of heads collected in a series of brutal murders over a period of many decades.

Whenever she wears a head, she gains the class and abilities associated with it prior to beheading. Thus, if she were to don the head of a 10th-level wizard, she would gain the spellcasting ability of such a character. The variety of heads she owns gives her a great assortment of skills and abilities.

Most of Jacqueline's heads are chosen not for their special abilities, but for their physical attractiveness. The same vanity that lead her to challenge Castle Ravenloft has caused her to assemble a collection of the most beautiful heads one could imagine. She spends countless hours making them up, changing their hair styles, and primping them.

Jacqueline has experimented with her special ability over the centuries. She has discovered that she cannot wear the heads of anything but human females. Males, and females of other races (like elves and even half-elves), are of no use to her. She prefers to claim new heads with her *vorpal sword* (due to the neatness of its cut), but this is by no means a requirement of her curse.

Ecology: Every day that Jacqueline spends wearing a given head ages it one year. When the head is not on her neck, it does not age. This rapid aging causes even the most beautiful head to quickly waste away. Because Jacqueline's vanity demands that she wear only the most beautiful heads, she is constantly seeking to replace her old heads with new ones.

Rather than destroying the heads that she no longer uses, Jacqueline simply tosses them into a great basement beneath her lavish home in Krezk. Because these heads do not die and remain fully aware, this chamber has become a pit of suffering as black as any found in the Abyss. Heads discarded here are kept in glass cases and stacked in row upon row as if they were crates in a great warehouse. The room is filled with an endless cacophony of screams, moans, and sobs as madness gradually claims the minds of those trapped here. Persons entering this foul area and gazing on the hundreds of eternally living and tormented heads must make a fear check at the very least. Spotting a friend's head among the heads is call for a horror check.

Neither Jacqueline nor her many heads has any need to eat or drink. Jacqueline herself still does so in the company of others, however, as this helps to maintain the illusion that she is a normal woman.

Adventure Ideas: Jacqueline's quest to recover her original head makes a fine focus for an adventure. She will welcome any information which might lead to its discovery and might well commission a company of adventurers to locate it for her.

Of course, her unending quest for new and beautiful heads might well bring her into conflict with a group of player characters. She could set her mind to claiming the head of a comely PC for herself. If this is not the case, she might also prove to be a threat to a PC's romantic interest or henchman.

Characters called upon to investigate her home will find it to be a macabre and gruesome place. While the vast majority of the mansion might seem normal enough, the "library" where she keeps her selection of heads will be more than enough evidence that they have stumbled upon something truly terrible.

The PCs might also discover Jacqueline's original head quite by accident while on some other adventure. Its location has deliberately not been specified here in order to enable the DM to place it anywhere in Ravenloft—i.e., wherever it would best fit into his or her campaign. It could even be inserted into an existing module. For instance, the adventure RQ3, *From the Shadows* makes mention of several disembodied heads kept by Azalin of Darkon; Jacqueline's could easily be among them.

Of course, once the PCs have Jacqueline's head, she will stop at nothing to get it back. Because it can be used to destroy her, she will consider anyone who holds her head to be a deadly enemy.

Human, Madmen (The Midnight Slasher)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Invidia (Karina)
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Average (10)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	5 (17 hit points)
THAC0:	18
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–5 (1d4+1)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Triple damage on backstabs
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Hide in Shadows 90%
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' 2" or 5' 8"; see below)
MORALE:	Unsteady (7)
XP VALUE:	650

The city of Karina lies nestled in a wooded valley carved by the sparkling waters of the Musarde River. Its cobblestone streets are kept clean and in good repair, flowers decorate window boxes throughout the town, and the weather is generally mild and pleasant.

One night each month, however, a thick fog boils from the river and flows through the streets. When this happens, people fear to leave their homes. They hide behind locked doors until the sun rises and burns off the hated mists. From behind barred windows, they peer nervously into the night and listen for the chiming of the great clock in the center of town. Almost without exception, the last bell of midnight is followed by a scream of terror somewhere in the city. As the echoes of this cry fade into the fog, people make holy signs and offer thanks that the Midnight Slasher has chosen someone else as his victim that night.

Though few have caught more than a fleeting glimpse of the Slasher, there are enough scattered reports of sightings to piece together a fair description of the fiend. The Slasher is tall, rather over six feet in height, and slender. He wears a wide-brimmed hat and a billowing cloak of some black fabric that seems to drink up the light, making him hard to see. The lower half of his face is obscured by a black cloth, above which maddened eyes stare out from a narrow band of pale skin. When he strikes, he uses a long, razor-sharp blade.

None have ever spoken with the Slasher, so it is not known what languages he might speak. The folk of Karina assume he is a native of Invidia, and thus understands the local language, although a few insist this fiend is a foreigner, probably one of those sinister Vistani outcasts known as Darklings.

Combat: The Midnight Slasher is not a man who likes to stand for a fair fight. However, when he is able to strike with surprise, he is a deadly assassin. The black cloak that he wears was crafted by the Drow of Arak and is said to have been fashioned from darkness itself. When the Slasher wears this cloak, he is able to Hide in Shadows with 90% effectiveness. In addition, he wears Drowish *boots of elvenkind* which enable him to Move Silently with a 95% chance of success. Both of these items work only in darkness; together, they give the Slasher triple the normal chance for surprise. If he attains surprise, the Slasher's attack is made with a +4 bonus to hit and inflicts triple damage. In addition, the Slasher has the following thiefly skills: Pick Pockets 50%; Open Locks 42%; Find & Remove Traps 42%; Move Silently 40% (95% with *boots*); Hide in Shadows 31% (90% with cloak); Hear Noise 20%; Climb Walls 90%.

The Slasher limits his attacks to individuals foolish or unlucky enough to be caught outside when the hour of midnight arrives. He never attacks groups of people nor anyone who looks as if he or she may pose a serious threat. If he fails to attain surprise, the Slasher will usually flee, using his Drow cloak to vanish into the night.

Habitat/Society: The Midnight Slasher's greatest secret is that "he" is in fact a woman—a fact which the good folk of Karina do not even begin to suspect. Part of the reason for this is that the cloak, hat, and boots not only hide her features but also make her appear taller than she really is. Another is that they cannot conceive that the shy and silent sneak thief they scoff at and curse by

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day and the brutal murderer they so fear by night could be one and the same.

The story of the Midnight Slasher begins not with the young woman herself, but with her parents. She was barely five years old when her father, a strong and handsome woodsman, drew the attention of the lord of Invidia, Gabrielle Aderre. After her first chance encounter with him, she learned that he was married with a wife and daughter to whom he was utterly devoted. Aderre vowed that his happiness would be destroyed and began to visit the woodsman regularly. Eventually, the temptress lured him into her arms with her unnatural charms.

As she toyed with the entranced woodsman over the next several weeks, she saw to it that his wife learned of her husband's infidelity. The tension that was growing between the young couple culminated when the wife and daughter returned home early from errands about town and discovered the lovers together. As Aderre stood by and watched with mocking laughter, the young couple plunged into a violent fight. With the prompting of the beautiful but evil witch, the argument grew into something that neither could control. In the end, husband and wife killed each other, utterly consumed by their overwhelming rage.

Aderre left the bloody scene well satisfied with the tragedy she had wrought. She paused in her departure only long enough to kneel beside the almost catatonic child and kiss her gently on the forehead. From that moment on, the young girl's sanity was destroyed.

For the next several years, the young orphan lived as a beggar on the streets of Karina. She stole food and clothing when she could, starved and shivered when she could not. She found shelter in the darkest sections of the city, a neighborhood inhabited by criminals, beggars, and harlots. She saw the latter as kin to the vile woman who destroyed her parents and began to develop a burning hatred for them. Gradually, she became more and more detached from the human race.

Years passed and the girl grew to adulthood on the streets. She spoke to no one, hid from others, and was all but invisible in the heart of Karina. One night, when a thick fog had rolled in from the river to fill the night with misty shapes, she happened across a traveling adventurer in the arms of a trollop. The scene reminded her so much of the one that she and her mother had walked in on that she flew into a wild rage. Over and over she tore at the woman with her dagger as the adventurer fled into the night. When she finished her butchery, the young thief stood over her kill and listened to the distant chiming of the city's great clock tower. As the last echoes faded, the Midnight Slasher was born.

I am the night.
I am the fog.
I am the knife.

You cannot hide from me.
You cannot run from me.
You cannot escape me.

The darkness is mine.
The anger is mine.
The vengeance is mine.

I live in your city.
I lurk in your nightmares.
I strike in your sleep.

Let those who live in filth tremble.
Let those who walk the streets weep.
Let those who hurt the children die.

—An assortment of verses found written in blood near the bodies of the Midnight Slasher's victims

Ecology: The Midnight Slasher lives in the darkness, just as she always has. She moves about the city; hiding, watching, and stalking her next victim. She survives by stealing food and drink. Her knowledge of the city's darkest corners—its dank alleys, abandoned buildings, and forgotten culverts—is unmatched, making her as deadly as any spider in its web.

Adventure Ideas: A Dungeon Master who plans to present the Midnight Slasher in his or her RAVENLOFT® game must be very careful. With a foe of this type, the line between horror and gore can be difficult to judge. If the Slasher is presented simply as an insane killing machine who leaves a trail of bodies behind her, then the atmosphere of gothic horror which distinguishes the RAVENLOFT game has been lost. Instead, the DM should take care to play up the Midnight Slasher as a stalking, macabre character. By using her knowledge of the city and her magical cloak, she can strike and then seem to vanish into thin air.

The most logical adventure to center around the Slasher would be one of detective work. The PCs are called upon to investigate the mysterious killings which have haunted the people of Karina for many years. The best hook to begin this adventure with would be a killing of someone important to the PCs.

Human, Voodan (Chicken Bone)

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Souragne
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptionally (16)
TREASURE:	S, V
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful neutral
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	10
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	1 (3 hit points)
THAC0:	See below
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–2 (1d2)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Voodan rituals
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Voodan rituals
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5′ tall)
MORALE:	Average (8)
XP VALUE:	120

The Voodan are a race of humans who are found only in the misty domains of Ravenloft. Some say they are an offshoot of the Vistani, but there is no real evidence to support this claim. Little is known about them, because they keep to themselves and never reveal anything of their pasts.

Chicken Bone is an old man who lives in the domain of Souragne. His real name is lost to the mists of history and none now speak it. When the people of Souragne speak of him now, they do so in hushed tones, for Chicken Bone is a Voodan—a master of dark and mysterious forces that most would not dare to contemplate, let alone attempt to control.

Chicken Bone looks for all the world like any other shrivelled old man. His hair is cut short and frazzled, looking as if it has never seen a comb. His grey eyes are set back beneath protruding brows and divided by a long, straight nose. He has no beard or moustache, save that his wrinkled chin is covered with a scattering of wiry whiskers. He wears bright, colorful (some would say gaudy) clothing. He may or may not be typical of the Voodan; so few of them have been encountered that it is impossible to say.

Chicken Bone walks with the aid of a long staff which he leans on heavily. Countless bones dangle from this staff. Despite his name, these bones come from many types of small animals, including lizards, chickens, squirrels, chipmunks, fish, and snakes.

Chicken Bone speaks in the language of the common folk of Souragne. Further, he claims to know the language of the dead and can *speak with dead* (or undead) at will. If there is a language native to the Voodan, Chicken Bone probably speaks it, but this is impossible for outsiders to judge.

Combat: Chicken Bone is exactly what he appears to be, a half-crippled old man. As such, he is hardly suited to melee combat. If forced to defend himself, he strikes with his staff, hitting only on a natural roll of 20 and inflicting merely 1–2 (1d2) points of damage with each blow.

However, this old man is able to call upon the forces of the undead to defend him. In general, he can call 2–12 (2d6) zombies to come to his aid. These creatures will be normal zombies (85%), monster zombies (10%), or ju-ju zombies (5%). The ritual to summon these defenders requires 1 hour to perform, so it is of little use if he is caught unawares by danger. However, if he is attacked in sight of any undead creature with no higher than Low intelligence, that monster will come immediately to Chicken Bone's aid.

Chicken Bone is able to employ a number of magical spells. In order to invoke any given power, however, he must complete a complex ritual. Given enough time, the old man can cast any spell from the schools of Necromancy, Enchantment/Charm, or Greater Divination. The ritual required to invoke these spells is quite involved and requires no less than 1 hour per level of the spell. During this time, the Voodan must be left undisturbed. The rituals by which Chicken Bone invokes his spells requires him to set alight numerous candles, burn certain incenses, and offer up the lives of one or more small animals as sacrifices—to what, he will not say. In addition to whatever material components the actual spell might require, Chicken Bone must have a *sympathetic token* from both the person hiring him

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to cast the spell and the person to be hindered or harmed by it. These tokens can range from things like a lock of hair, some nail clippings, or a drop of blood to personal possessions like a favorite weapon, a wedding ring, or an important lucky charm. Range is not a consideration, for the use of the *sympathetic item* negates all such concerns.

Neither of the sympathetic items are destroyed in the casting of the spell and Chicken Bone retains them afterwards as part of the contract for his services. In this way, he is able to cast spells on his patrons if they later threaten or refuse to pay him.

Habitat/Society: As has been said, Chicken Bone's origins are utterly unknown. Indeed, it is said that he himself no longer remembers them. So far as Souragne is concerned, the story of this gnarled old man begins some twenty years ago.

It was a cold night and the last full moon of the year hung in the sky like a great jaundiced eye, when word spread through Souragne that a strange man had appeared in the swamps west of Port d'Elhour. He had assembled a shack of sugar cane, bamboo, and reeds on an island in the center of Lake Noir. At the same time, a rickety raft appeared near the shores with a long pole that could be used to navigate the open water and reach the island.

Word quickly spread that this old man was a master of strange spells. For a price, it was said, he would use these powers to strike down enemies. As payment for his services, he required only that supplicants perform some service for him. As a rule, these services were minor. On rare occasions, however, the task required might be quite extreme. The severity of the required payment seemed to have no relationship to the action that Chicken Bone performed.

Those who failed to repay their debt to the old man soon fell ill and died. No magical or natural healing seemed able to save them. Once dead, these sorry souls are said to have risen anew as ju-ju zombies who now wander the marshes around Lake Noir. They are now the minions of the Voodan, repaying their obligation with an eternity of servitude.

When someone hires Chicken Bone to cast a spell, the task that he requires of them should be decided upon ahead of time by the Dungeon Master. Like so many aspects of Ravenloft, this seemingly random event ought to be controlled to promote the overall flavor of the game and to drive the plot forward. It is important to note that the old man does not reveal his price until after his ritual is completed and the spell cast. The price for his services, he insists, comes to him during the ritual.

Ecology: The Voodan are an unusual people. They seem to have no homeland, instead settling in many diverse places. There are reports of them living atop mountain peaks, in remote caves deep beneath the surface of the earth, or at the heart of impassible swamps. Wherever they dwell, however, they make their homes difficult to reach. While they are not selective in their customers, those who wish to employ their services must prove their desire by surmounting whatever obstacles might stand between them and the Voodan. Chicken Bone is no exception; the swamps around him are alive with deadly monsters. Reaching his island home can be an adventure in itself.

It is worth mentioning that Chicken Bone seems to have some immunity to the horrors living in the swamp around him. None of the terrible creatures that lurk near him, whether they be magical or mundane, will attack him. Indeed, most will come to his aid if he is attacked. Thus, while it is impossible to say for certain, it seems likely that anyone who kills the old man will stand little chance of escaping the swamps of Souragne alive. In addition, rumor has it that a major curse will strike anyone who harms the Voodan; the truth of this rumor, and the nature of the curse, is up to the Dungeon Master.

Adventure Ideas: Seeking out Chicken Bone to have him cast a spell upon one's enemies is generally not something any group of player characters will want to do. After all, such actions may well require them to make Dark Powers checks. Further, they will then have to leave some *sympathetic object* in the old man's possession and do him a service, probably not something the average PC will find palatable.

On the other hand, someone might well use the old man's powers to hamper the efforts of the PCs. If this happens, the adventurers may find themselves forced to seek out the hermit and confront him to learn the nature of their enemy. It might also be necessary for the party to recover the *sympathetic item(s)* used against them. In addition to the fact that Chicken Bone will be very reluctant to part with the items he has acquired, the PCs may find it difficult to locate the specific thing they are searching for, as the old man's home is cluttered and strewn with a bizarre assortment of things.

The land of Souragne is featured in the novel *Dance of the Dead* and in the module RQ1, *Night of the Walking Dead*. Dungeon Masters running that adventure might find Chicken Bone an interesting addition to it. He could serve as an ally to the player characters, providing them with useful information and magic if they are having too tough a time with things. Conversely, he could aid the forces of darkness if the adventurers are finding the adventure insufficiently challenging.

Lich, Bardic (Andres Duvall)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any in Ravenloft
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Magical energies
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17)
TREASURE:	W
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral good
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	9 (45 hit points)
THAC0:	11
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–8 (2d4)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Magic absorption
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapon to hit; fear aura
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Special
SIZE:	M (6′ tall)
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	13,000

Throughout the domains of Ravenloft and in countless other worlds, there are few creatures more terrible than the lich. In most cases, these diabolical creatures seek out the means by which they attain undead status, willingly sacrificing their humanity in the quest for forbidden knowledge and unchecked power. In rare cases, the curse of eternal life has been thrust upon someone quite accidentally. Such tragedies are few and far between, but sadly they do occur.

Combat: Andres Duvall is not a true lich. Still, his powers resemble those of these foul undead so strongly that it seems best to classify him among their number.

Like a true lich, Duvall radiates an aura of magical terror that causes all creatures of fewer than 5 Hit Dice (or 5th level) to make a fear check or flee in terror for 5–20 (5d4) rounds.

In melee combat, Andres strikes with a chilling touch. This effect is somewhat less potent than is common in true liches. As such, it inflicts only 2-8 (2d4) points of damage. Anyone struck by Duvall must make a Saving Throw vs. Paralysis or be unable to move for a number of rounds equal to the number of damage points inflicted. This paralysis can be *dispelled* normally. In addition to his chilling touch and the paralysis it causes, Duvall can drain the magical energies of spellcasters in the manner described in more detail below.

Duvall is immune to injury by weapons which are not of at least +1 magical enchantment. He is immune to all manner of *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, *cold*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *lightning*, *insanity*, or *death* spells. Duvall can be turned as any other 9 Hit Dice undead.

As a 9th-level bard, Duvall has the use of some magical spells. On any given day, he can employ three first-level, three second-level, and two third-level spells, with the following being his favorite choices: *color spray*, *phantasmal force*, and *sleep*; *glitterdust*, *improved phantasmal force*, and *pyrotechnics*; *fire ball* and *wraithform*. Duvall also has the thievish abilities to Climb Walls (80%), Detect Noise (50%), Pick Pockets (50%), and Read Languages (45%). He has lost his ability to influence crowds, inspire friends and allies, or counter magical songs but does retain his 45% chance to know the history or lore of any magical item he comes across.

Because of the unusual way in which Andres Duvall became undead, he does not have a phylactery or similar vessel containing his life force.

Duvall's transformation resulted in the creation of a special ability unknown among true liches. Magical energies directed at him do not affect him in any way. Rather, these energies are absorbed and serve to strengthen his life force. When Duvall is injured, he does not regain hit points through normal healing or any form of regeneration. Rather, he must absorb spell energy. He can do this in two ways. The first, and easiest, is to simply have spells cast at him. Any spell, regardless of its nature, will have no effect upon him other than to restore 1 lost hit point per level of the spell. Thus, a 5th-level spell like *magic jar* cast upon him will restore 5 hit points. Spell effects from objects work the same way, with the DM having the final word in deciding the effective level of any such spells.

Alternately, Duvall can absorb spell energy by touching a wizard, cleric, or other spellcaster. In combat, this

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requires an attack roll; in other situations it may not. As soon as the victim is touched, the highest level spell he or she (or it) had memorized is lost and Duvall gains its energy in the form of regenerated hit points. If more than one spell of the highest level is available, the one absorbed should be determined by a random die roll.

Duvall is able to absorb spell energy even when he is at his maximum hit point total, but he gains no additional hit points from this process.

Habitat/Society: Andres Duvall was a half-elf born in the domain of Darkon some one hundred and fifty years ago. He was born to an elven mother and a human father in the community of Sidnar, south of Lake Korst. The status of his parents was great enough that he was accepted by the community. Indeed, the young Duvall was so sweet a child that he was cherished and loved by all the elves. In return, Duvall loved the elves. He learned their songs, their stories, and their legends. As a young man, their love of beauty and magic drove him to wander the world, seeking out its majesty.

As he travelled, Duvall mastered his skills as a bard. He learned many things, many bright and happy, some dark and sinister. It was his unending search for new stories and songs that brought the terrible curse of undeath upon him.

While visiting the elves of Neblus, he came upon the fragments of an ancient tome. This mysterious document told the tale of a young wizard who sought greater and greater power. At first, he found the story distracting. As he read more, he found it engrossing, though horrifying. In the end, he knew that he had found an account detailing the process by which Azalin, the Lord of Darkon, had become a lich.

Unable to believe what he had read, he destroyed the book and tried to forget what he had read. His soul, however, had been tainted by the evils he had studied. Every night, terrible visions haunted his dreams. Every night, he awoke in a trembling fit with the image of Castle Avernus searing his mind.

At last, he travelled to the terrible fortress where Azalin dwelt. Timidly, he approached the door and, to his surprise, it swung open to admit him. All but entranced, he wandered in and the door slammed shut behind him.

For the next week, Andres was both a prisoner and a guest in Castle Avernus. By Azalin's command, he told stories and sang songs, lightening the dark mood of the domain's master. In return, the lich told him the tale of his life and his years in Ravenloft. It seemed to Duvall that Azalin found it almost a relief to tell another his morbid story.

Duvall was certainly fascinated by the story of Azalin's life, death, and unlife. He was also convinced that the dark lord was not telling him all that there was to know. He decided that he must learn more and slipped quietly into the lich's inner sanctum.

As he explored this terrible place, Azalin discovered his trespasses and confronted him. Enraged at this violation of his hospitality, the lich unleashed a stroke of magical lightning at the bard. Reacting quickly, Duvall attempted to shield himself with the great book he had been about to examine. The lightning struck the tome, which happened to be one of Azalin's most potent books of spells, and a terrible explosion shook the castle. Showers of blazing fragments ignited fires around the room and thick, acrid smoke boiled into the air.

Dazed, but amazed that he had survived at all, Duvall fled. Azalin, intent on saving his magical laboratory, did not pursue. Thus, Duvall escaped and went into hiding.

As the days passed, it became more and more clear to Duvall that the accident in the laboratory had made some great change in his body. To his horror, he found that his heart no longer beat and that he did not breathe. He had not survived the attack, after all. Gradually, Duvall's appearance began to change as well. His skin dried and stretched tight across his bones. He began to look more and more like the withered Azalin. Within a week, he was so horrible to look upon that most folk fled from him in terror at first sight.

Ecology: Duvall survives by feeding upon magical energies. Each day, he must absorb a minimum of one level of spell energy to satisfy his hunger.

Adventure Ideas: Despite his transformation into an undead creature, Duvall remains a force for good in Ravenloft. He is one of Azalin's most hated enemies, for he knows many of that lord's secrets from his time in Castle Avernus. As such, any group of heroes planning to confront the dread master of Darkon might well find a powerful ally in Andres Duvall.

On his own, Duvall recognizes that he can not hope to survive a direct confrontation with the lich lord. Because of this, he wanders the domains and islands of Ravenloft looking for allies and weapons that he can turn against his nemesis. It would not be out of character for Duvall to act as a patron of the PCs in any manner of adventure that might require the discovery of lost secrets or the recovery of an ancient weapon.

Although he is not mentioned in either RQ3, *From the Shadows* or its sequel RM1, *Roots of Evil*, Duvall could easily be inserted into either of these modules. His hatred of Azalin has led him to side with the enemies of Darkon many times over the years, so he just might even be able bring himself to strike some bargain with Strahd Von Zarovich if he thought it might enable him to finally destroy his foe.

Lycanthrope, Weretiger (Jahed)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Sri Raji
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any (Commonly night)
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (15)
TREASURE:	Qx5 (D)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	3
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	6+2 (42 hit points)
THAC0:	15
NO. ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–4(1d4)/1–4(1d4)/1–12(1d12)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	2–5 (1d4+1)/2–5 (1d4+1)
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Hit only by silver or magical weapons
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5' 10" tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	2,000

Jahed came into Sri Raji as a young adult. At that time, he was a specimen of physical fitness blessed with strong limbs, keen senses, and a quick mind. In the years that have passed since his arrival, the rigors of life in Ravenloft have left their mark on him. His once gentle and laughing features have hardened and become cruel. His green eyes smoulder with an anger that is constantly ready to erupt into acts of physical violence. The flowing mane of copper hair that he sported as a lad has been replaced with a savagely cropped crew cut.

Jahed prefers to wear dark clothes, for they enable him to move about in the shadows and alleys without being seen. He has spent some time in the lands of Kara-Tur, and his garb is based loosely on that of the ninjas that he met there. He carries no weapons, being well able to defend himself without them.

Jahed speaks the common tongues of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, Kara-Tur, and Sri Raji, having learned the last since his arrival in the domain.

Combat: Jahed will almost always revert to his weretiger form before engaging in combat. In this shape, he strikes with his deadly front claws (1d4/1d4), bites with his keen fangs (1d12), and rakes with his rending rear claws (1d4+1/1d4+1). His combination of intelligence and brute force make him a deadly opponent indeed. Jahed himself is immune to attacks made with weapons that are not silver or at least bearing a +1 enchantment.

In those rare cases where Jahed is forced to engage in combat while in his human form, he will seek to disengage as quickly as possible, falling back to buy himself the time to transform into a tiger.

Jahed uses his shape-shifting ability as something of an attack in itself. When fighting untrained or easily spooked people (that is, the average peasant or green guardsman), he makes certain that his enemy sees him transform. In most cases, such people must make a morale check, if not a fear or horror check.

Jahed seldom travels anywhere without a pair of body guards. Like himself, these two will be deadly weretigers.

Habitat/Society: Jahed is a stranger in Sri Raji. He was born to a tribe of wanderers in the Dalelands of the Forgotten Realms. His parents were skilled entertainers and not a little bit larcenous at heart. Because he knows all the tricks and sleight of hand that they use to appear mystical and mysterious, Jahed places no stock in stories of Vistani power. On those few occasions when he meets this folk, he treats them with scorn and contempt.

Jahed's father, Mercurio, was a cruel and prying man. He delighted in the suffering of those whom they passed in their travels and, whenever it was convenient, took a hand in making such circumstances even worse. Jahed's mother, Antelucia, was timid and sickly, having been battered into submission by her abusive husband long before Jahed's birth.

When Jahed was still a teenager, he met and fell in love with a girl named Milissa. Because Milissa was an elegant young lady, Jahed was careful to avoid letting her know of his family's lowly status.

Mercurio, however, noticed his son's secret depar-

Lycanthrope, Weretiger (Jahed)

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tures from their camp and decided to find out what the youngster was up to. He followed Jahed's path into the heart of a thick forest and there found the embracing lovers. Furious, he charged forward and struck Jahed with his heavy walking stick. The boy was sent spinning away from Milissa and fell to his knees.

With his son too dazed to interfere, Mercurio turned his attention to Milissa. At first he verbally abused her, questioning her virtue and demanding that she leave his son alone. He drifted into insults, calling her a tramp and a harlot, and then struck at her with his cane.

Much to his surprise, the girl nimbly avoided the blow and sprang at him. In mid-leap, she became a snarling tigress. Landing fully upon Mercurio, she snapped powerful jaws down on his windpipe and tore his abdomen open with her raking claws, killing him almost instantly.

Jahed, hearing his father's dying cry, recovered his senses enough to realize that some creature was attacking his father and rushed into the fray. Still somewhat dazed from his father's blow, he had no idea that the monster before him was actually his beloved. Drawing his slender dagger, Jahed stabbed at the tigress.

Instinctively, Milissa whirled about and ripped at him with her claws. Badly wounded, Jahed collapsed and lost consciousness. Hours later, he awoke to find himself lying beside a stream that trickled along under the stars of a cloudless autumn night, his wounds carefully tended. Nearby he found a note from Milissa explaining that she would never be able to see him again.

Jahed, whose life had been one of broken promises and harsh punishments, took the heartbreaking news well. The traumas of his life had been such that he assumed she had simply been using him for a brief fling.

In time, his wounds healed and he returned to the travelling life that he had always known. He thought no more of his lost love and devoted himself to caring for his mother. With Mercurio dead, Antelucia began to brighten and take an interest in the world around her. When she died nine months after her husband, Jahed buried her with a remorse he never felt for his father.

Three months after his mother died, on the anniversary of Mercurio's death, a strange transformation came over Jahed. He had become a weretiger. Once he overcame his surprise, over the course of the next several months Jahed fought to understand the strange legacy of his first love.

With time and effort, he found that he was able to control the metamorphosis and become a tiger whenever he wished. However, he also found that he would transform every year on the day of Mercurio's death and that nothing could cause him to resume his normal form save the taking of a human, demihuman, or humanoid life.

Over the years, Jahed's personality changed. The occasional harshness which he had inherited from his father took on a more calculating edge. Recognizing the wild and chaotic nature of Mercurio's life, he sought to give his own a sense of order. While he was unable to throw off the burden of cruelty and wickedness that was his legacy from years of mistreatment, he lifted himself above his father's brutality.

Years later, travelling through a region of thick jungles in search of an ancient treasure that was said to lie hidden there, Jahed came across a ruined temple and entered it. Inside, he found tiger mosaics, figurines, and other items that led him to believe that this place had once been sacred to others like himself.

He felt strangely awed by the ruins. Here, he felt, was a home such as he had never known in the lands of normal men. Jahed quickly made up his mind to make this place his den from that day forth. He swore to restore it to its former glory and spend the rest of his days in this tropical land.

The first night that Jahed spent in this temple, he had an unusual and terrifying dream. He found himself in the company of Ravana, the rakshasa god to whom the temple had been sacred. The god charged him with the task of hunting down and destroying Arijani, the god's own son who had become a traitor to his people. The idea of serving another greater than himself had never occurred to Jahed before, but—impressed by the sheer power that seemed to engulf this ancient god—Jahed eagerly agreed and vowed not to die until the betrayer was repaid for his crimes.

He awoke to find himself in Ravenloft, in Arijani's own domain of Sri Raji. When he began to explore his new home, Jahed found himself hunted by the priestesses of Kali, allies of Arijani who seek to destroy any visitor to the realm. Lucky to escape alive, he was forced to flee into the jungles as his temple was razed.

Jahed found survival difficult at first, even for someone with his great powers. Eventually, however, he learned to blend in with the natives of the domain and sought for ways to carry out his mission. For the past several years, he has devoted himself to the creation of The Stalkers, a secret society devoted to bringing down Arijani's reign. By spreading lycanthropy to a select few, he has built up a small but powerful group united by a common hatred of Kali's priestesses.

Adventure Ideas: Jahed is featured in the module RM3, *Web of Illusion*, which details his latest attempt to destroy the rakshasa lord Arijani. Because he is both evil and opposed to the lord of a domain, Jahed can be cast as either a friend or foe to the adventurers. Any scenario that involves him should center around his efforts to defeat Arijani or thwart some plan of the dark lord.

Meazel (Salizarr)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Darkon
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Low (6)
TREASURE:	(B)
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	8
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	4 (13 hit points)
THAC0:	15
NO. ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–4 (1d4)/1–4 (1d4)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Strangulation; disease; thief abilities
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Thief abilities
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (4′ 6″ tall)
MORALE:	Steady (11)
XP VALUE:	270

People have always feared the darkness, often with good reason. After all, there are things in the black shadows of night more horrible than any vision that might come to a person in sleep. When this dread is combined with the creeping anxiety that comes with travel underground, it becomes a gnawing terror that quickens the pulse of even the stoutest hero. In the dread domain of Darkon, in the maze of sewers beneath the great city of Il Aluk, this horror has a name: Salizarr.

Salizarr is a meazel, a sly and murderous race. His skin is rough and olive green in color, marked here and there by angry red patches of blisters and sores. His black hair, thick and wiry, juts away from his head as if blown back by a great wind, framing his triangular face. His jet-black eyes are set in narrow slits and gleam as if they were cut from black marble. His mouth is thin and angular, vanishing almost completely when closed but opening to reveal a frightening array of needle-like teeth. Although this terrible creature wears no clothing, he does adorn himself with a piece of jewelry, a dangling earring that connects by a chain to a jewelled nose-stud; this is somewhat unusual, as his kind do not generally value such things.

Salizarr speaks the hissing, guttural language of his people, as well as the Common Tongue of Darkon. The latter, however, is heavily accented and can be quite difficult to understand. It is said that he can speak with the rats of sewers, but this may be myth.

Combat: In close combat, Salizarr is a deadly enemy. Like all meazels, his speed and strength give him a better THAC0 than would normally accrue to a monster of his Hit Dice. His ripping claws can strike twice per round, inflicting 1–4 (1d4) points of damage each. As if this were not enough, the filth of the sewers has collected on his talons. Thus, everyone who is hit by Salizarr's attack must make a Saving Throw vs. Poisons (with a +4 bonus) or contract a debilitating disease as described under the 3rd-level priest's spell *cure disease*.

Salizarr is fond of strangling lone victims who are under seven feet in height. When he does this, he employs a knotted cord that not only cuts off the air flow of the victim but may actually crush the windpipe. Salizarr only employs his strangulation attack when he is attacking with surprise and from behind. Because of his thieving skills and knowledge of the sewers, he is frequently able to catch his victims unawares, gaining a bonus of +4 on his attack roll.

In order to loop his deadly cord about the neck of a potential victim, Salizarr leaps onto his target's back and rolls his attack. If successful, once the line is in place the meazel applies his considerable (18/50) Strength to it. If he is not dislodged within two rounds, the victim's windpipe has been crushed and death by suffocation is unavoidable.

Forcing Salizarr to release his grip is not easy; he will not willingly loosen his strangling line once it is in place except to defend himself. A player character wishing to break free of his deadly embrace must do so in accordance with the unarmed combat rules described in the *Player's Handbook*. Thus, a successful throw, gouge, or hit with a weapon is required, and a victim wearing armor suffers a penalty of anywhere from –1 to as much as –10 on his or her attack.

Meazel (Salizarr)

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The meazel's natural agility and knowledge of the sewers gives him some useful expertise similar to that of a master thief. Thus, he has the following special abilities: Pick Pockets (45%), Open Locks (37%), Find/Remove Traps (35%), Move Silently (33%), Hide in Shadows (25%), Hear Noise (15%), Climb Walls (88%), and Read Languages (20%).

If a combat seems to be going against Salizarr, he will attempt to flee. In general, he is fast and agile enough to do this with ease. If he is pursued, he will attempt to lead his enemies into deadly danger. While he does not set traps or similar hazards to protect his lair, he knows where there are patches of green slime or puddles of grey ooze. With his enemies generally unaware of these dangers, he can frequently dodge them while his opponents stumble right into them.

Habitat/Society: Salizarr lurks in the great maze of sewers that curl beneath Il Aluk. No one knows how extensive this labyrinth is, for there is no record of its construction. It may well be that this underground complex was fashioned by the magic of the lich lord Azalin or even some other, darker power. Whoever or whatever the architect of this great place was, there is no doubt that Salizarr is its master now.

Salizarr is a relative newcomer to Ravenloft, having come into the Demiplane of Dread roughly one year ago. Before that time, Salizarr lived in a series of catacombs not far from the city of Cormyr in the Forgotten Realms. One day, a stranger wandered into his underground realm and Salizarr attacked him. The man broke free of his grip and bolted away into the shadows. Enraged and ravenous, the meazel pursued him. After countless twists and turns, Salizarr had to concede that his victim had escaped him. He slowed from a run to a trot and then realized that he had no idea where he was.

The natural complex of caverns that had been his home for so many years was gone. Now, he found himself moving through a series of man-made sewers. After several days of trying to find his way home, it became obvious that his efforts were futile, so he determined to make this new place his own.

At that time, the sewers were home to a tribe of kobolds, living in an alcove near a nexus of two major tunnels. It wasn't long before Salizarr had hunted them down and destroyed them all, one by one. Once they had been removed, Salizarr claimed their quarters for his own, scattering the previous occupants' bones around in various geometric patterns by way of decoration. He has since forgotten his original home, and now believes that he has always lived in these sinister tunnels.

Salizarr collects the gold and silver carried by his victims, but has no interest in accumulating other treasures. He wears an unusual earring, but keeps no other jewelry or art objects. What this or any other meazel plans to do with his hoarded treasure is anybody's guess.

Whenever Salizarr makes a kill, he strips the body of valuables (i. e., coins). Items that he does not deem valuable, including weapons, armor, and magical items, he carries to a nearby pit and tosses in. At the bottom of this eighty-foot hole is a foot-deep pool of green slime. In this horrible bath, not even magical items can survive for long. Because green slime is unable to dissolve them, it is likely that there may be dozens of valuable gems at the bottom of the pit. Anyone capable of defeating the slime and recovering them might find this quite a valuable treasure.

Ecology: As a meazel, Salizarr seems to hunger constantly for the flesh of humans, demihumans, and humanoids. Because such folk seldom come into the sewers, however, he is forced to subsist on a diet of rats and similar vermin. When this unsatisfactory board becomes too bland for him, he ventures out of the sewers to strike at the folk of Il Aluk. On those dark nights, the screams of his victims can be heard as he drags them back into the sewers to torture and destroy.

Adventure Ideas: Salizarr lurks like a bogeyman in the sewers. Stories about this terrible creature abound, though many do not believe that he really exists. Few have seen him, and those who have are troubled by nightmares of his evil visage for the rest of their days. The players will find him a cunning adversary and the sewers in which he dwells a horrible lair. Exploring these dreadful tunnels can be quite an adventure.

The PCs might be introduced to Salizarr when one of their henchmen vanishes, dragged into the sewers to satisfy the meazel's carnal hunger. Because of his craven nature, Salizarr is not above stalking children as well. It could be that the PCs will be called upon to rescue some young innocent who has been taken by the fiend.

Once the PCs are in the sewers, they will find themselves in a hostile, alien domain. These tunnels are littered with vermin, slimes, and other disgusting menaces. While Salizarr is not an overly intelligent creature, he is shrewd and has come to know his new home quite well. He will use his familiarity with the sewers and the menaces that dwell there to lead the player characters into dangerous places.

Medusa (Althea)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Lamordia (Demise)
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Day
DIET:	Omnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11)
TREASURE:	P, Qx10, X (Y)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	5
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	6 (27 hit points)
THAC0:	15
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1 or 1–6 (1d6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Petrification; poison; blindness
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Elite (13)
XP VALUE:	3,000

Northwest of the domain of Lamordia, beyond even the terrible Isle of Agony, lies a small island known only as Demise. Those who pass near the island have reported hearing songs of great beauty drifting out across the waves. Sailors who travel to this island seldom return, however, for the only thing to be found of the island of Demise is death at the hands of Althea.

Althea is a medusa, one of that terrible race of women who sport tresses of deadly vipers instead of hair atop their heads. Like all her kind, Althea's body is that of a slender, even shapely human woman. Her countenance, however, is dreadful, having the general features of a human face but possessing the scales and texture of a reptile. Her eyes are nothing more than black beads, her mouth but a lipless slit through which her forked tongue slips in and out to taste the air for odors.

Althea's senses are, on the whole, similar to those of a normal human. However, her eyes are somewhat weaker and are bothered by bright light. Her sense of smell, conversely, is far better than a human's. These two tend to balance out, making modifications to surprise rolls and the like unnecessary.

It is impossible to say with certainty which languages Althea does or does not know. While she seems to know the language of Lamordia, she speaks it with a pronounced accent. What her home language is, or where she might have originated, is unknown.

Combat: Althea's primary weapon is, of course, her petrification attack. Anyone who looks into her snake-like eyes is instantly transformed to stone unless he or she can make a Saving Throw vs. Petrification. This attack can affect a single enemy per round and has a maximum range of 30 feet.

The power of Althea's gaze is so great that it extends even into the Astral and Ethereal planes. Indeed, she is able to see creatures moving about in these nether-regions as plainly as she sees those on the Prime Material Plane.

Even death does not instantly halt the effect of this deadly gaze. Looking into the eyes of a slain medusa still requires a saving throw, although this is made with a +1 bonus per day that has passed since the creature died. Indeed, because any natural roll of "1" is an automatic failure on this saving throw, this gaze weapon still has a 5% chance of functioning for centuries after the actual death of the creature.

Althea is vulnerable to her own petrifying gaze. For that reason, she abhors mirrors and similar objects. Any brightly polished metal surface can be used to turn her gaze back upon her, forcing her to save or be petrified. Non-metal reflectors will not serve to destroy her; the *gaze reflection* spell is similarly impotent. The gaze of another medusa cannot petrify her, but that of a different type of creature (like a basilisk) can. If she is turned to stone, looking upon her petrified remains no longer carries the risk of death.

The snakes atop her head are able to attack each round. Althea's asps can bite for a single point of damage, but anyone bitten must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison or die instantly.

In addition to this bite, Althea's snakes can spit their venom at a range of up to 10 feet. Each combat round, every enemy within this range will be attacked in this

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manner and must make a Saving Throw vs. Breath Weapons. Failure to make this save indicates that the snake has scored a hit on the target's eyes, permanently blinding him or her. The victim will be unable to see, with all the penalties and disadvantages that might normally be associated with such state, until he or she receives a *cure blindness* or similar spell.

In melee combat, Althea attacks with a slender-bladed short sword. This weapon does 1d6 points of damage against medium targets and 1d8 points of damage to large ones. While it is quite ornate and valuable (being worth some 500 gold pieces), it is not magical in any way. Althea has also been known to employ a short bow in combat, attacking targets as far as 150 yards away and doing 1d6 points of damage per arrow that strikes its mark. From time to time, Althea will use her asps' poison to make these weapons more deadly.

Habitat/Society: Demise, the island on which Althea lives, is far from hospitable. Indeed, it is little more than a great outcropping of rock amid the grey-blue expanse of the Sea of Sorrows. Those who approach by sea will find no safe anchorage near the rocky cliffs that pass for Demise's shore. A small boat might reach the coast safely, but only the most experienced seaman would stand much chance of surviving such an attempt.

The first report of Althea's appearance dates back about 50 years. The *Doma Ordana*, a small merchant ship running north from Ludendorf to Martira Bay found itself caught in a terrible storm which hung above the sea south of The Finger. In an effort to avoid the brunt of the storm, the ship's captain, a Lamordian named Johan Wehner, decided to sail around the Isle of Agony rather than risk the turbulent channel.

All went well until the voyage was half-over, when the ship rammed something beneath the waterline and split open. Most of the crew died when *Doma Ordana* vanished beneath the storm-tossed water. Wehner and five of his men managed to cling to floating debris and make their way to the shores of a rocky island. They found the coasts utterly inhospitable, being nothing but rocky cliffs and crushing surf. With some effort, they managed to come safely ashore, becoming, so far as they knew, the first men ever to step upon the island known as Demise. Wehner's records of his exploration of the island were found adrift in a wooden keg several months later.

His account begins with the scaling of the cliffs. At the point where he and his men went ashore, this formidable climb was no less that 50 feet. Further, the rock was broken and loose, making it a very dangerous ascent. Good luck was with them, however, for the entire company completed the climb safely.

Wehner described the surface of the island as resembling a rock plateau or region of badlands. One of his men had spent some time in Kartakass and likened the area to the neighboring region of Bluetspur. Those familiar with that foul domain will certainly understand the unflattering image that such a comparison conveys.

The explorers reported no vegetation of any merit on the island, and the only fresh water they found were pools and puddles from the recent storm. Determined to find food and drink, they headed further inland.

Again, luck was with them. The center of the island was a great depression, hinting at a possible volcanic origin. Within this large crater, life had indeed taken hold. Springs of hot water boiled up from deep underground, filling the air with a thick sulphurous steam. Plants had taken vigorous hold here, transforming the region into a rich, tropical jungle. Animal life, however, seemed nonexistent, a fact which troubled Wehner and his crew greatly.

For two days, the castaways found life in the caldera of that ancient volcano pleasant, if dull. They ate and drank, recovering from the abuses of the storm and their trek across the rocky island. When they were well again, they began to explore their temporary home. While his men began to build the boat that would carry them back to the mainland, Wehner set about exploring the place.

Near the center of the great forest, he came across a strange structure. Built of some incredibly hard white stone, it seemed endless as he walked along its perimeter. At last, however, he came upon an arch in this mysterious barrier. Runes unlike any he had seen before adorned the portal, and he decided to proceed no farther on his own.

The next day, Wehner returned to the portal with his men. They had fashioned spears to defend themselves and carried the knives they had brought with them from the ship. None of them could make anything of the inscription. Together they entered the large, flat structure.

Inside, they found the place to be a great maze of featureless halls. It wasn't long before the company had gotten turned around and were hopelessly lost in this labyrinth. Once again, the men found themselves wandering and without adequate provisions.

From time to time, they came across fine statues of men, women, and demihumans. In every case these were so lifelike and intricate that he and his men thought they might suddenly come to life. The statues seemed to represent a great variety of explorers, adventurers, and sailors. Despite their many differences, they all had one trait in common: without exception, the faces of the statues were twisted in horror and revulsion. Wehner thought the sculptor's taste and technique odd, and wondered what mortal hand had crafted these ghastly icons.

When Wehner estimated that they had spent ten hours exploring the web of white stone, he called for them to hold up and make camp. His men were tired and further exploration was likely to yield nothing without rest. One of the men stood watch while the others slept soundly.

When Wehner awoke, he saw that some horror had

Medusa (Althea)

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come upon them in the night. The guard had been transformed into a statue. Like all the others, his face bore the unmistakable mask of someone whose last thoughts had been consumed with nightmarish fear and dread. Unable to do anything for their lost companion, Wehner and his crew redoubled their efforts at escape.

For several days this sad company wandered the labyrinth. From time to time they caught sight of some dreadful shadow flashing across the smooth walls. Not long after such a sighting, one of the men would let out a cry of agony and become petrified. In the end, only Wehner himself remained.

Wehner made ready to face the thing that was stalking him. He tied a band about his eyes so that he could not look above the creature's waist. When it came to destroy him, however, Wehner was surprised to find that it did not charge forward like a mad beast. Rather, the medusa spoke to him, her words ringing softly off the walls of the labyrinth.

"You need not fear me, brave sailor," the husky, seductive voice sang. "I shall not harm you. I, Althea, have chosen you above all others. You and I are meant to be together. Look upon me—am I not attractive in your eyes?"

Wehner's blindfold allowed him to see Althea from the waist down. The perfection of her body was greater than that of any woman he had ever seen. When combined with the sheer perfection of her voice, the temptation was almost more than he could bear. In his heart, a sudden passion burned that called for him to pull away his blindfold and look upon the woman.

Althea stepped closer and Wehner could see that she was holding out her arms to him. Only then did he hear the hissing of asps and regain his conviction. Blindly, he struck at her with his blade. The cry of agony that echoed through the labyrinth was more than enough to tell him that his aim had been true.

Although wounded, however, Althea was not defeated. She grabbed at Wehner, ripping the blindfold from his face. Before he could look away, the asps upon her head spat their deadly venom into his eyes, leaving him blind.

Althea hissed at him, vowing that he would die slowly and in great pain. Wehner, his nerve shattered by the horror that he had faced, turned and fled. He didn't know how badly he had wounded Althea, but she did not pursue him. He hoped that his attack would prove fatal, but something in his heart knew better.

To his surprise, the blinded Wehner found his way out of the labyrinth. He surmised, correctly, that the place was built as much of illusion as of stone. Without his eyes to guide him, he was far less vulnerable to the labyrinth's magic.

Wehner's account ends with his escape from the labyrinth, and his ultimate fate is unknown to the outside world. Most assume that he died trying to escape the rocky Demise or that he returned to the labyrinth and fell victim to the deadly Althea.

I know now the nature of the beast that stalks me. After the petrification of Varshon, I knew that I must confront the thing or die myself. Escape, it seems, is no longer an option.

I hold no illusions about my fate. I have little chance of overcoming this dreadful creature, but I must try. The souls of my men have been lost; can their captain do less than seek vengeance for them? I think not.

It is death to look into the eyes of this creature; that much I have surmised. To that end, I have bound my eyes. I have left myself some vision, but I can see nothing above the level of my waist. With luck, I shall be able to see enough of my enemy's movements to defend myself somewhat. What weapons it may have beyond this gaze I cannot say.

I have my knife, the blade that was my mother's, and I cannot help but think that it will not fail me. It comes for me now; I can hear its footfall. I must make ready to strike.

Heaven guide my knife that I might end the life of this horrible creature once and for all.

—From the journal of Johan Wehner

No one can say for certain how Althea came to be in Ravenloft. It seems certain that she is not a native of the Demiplane of Dread. The architecture of the labyrinth is classical in nature, calling to mind images of the Acropolis and similar structures. The runes above the entrance have no meaning in any known language; even magic has failed to reveal their hidden message.

Among the sailors who travel through The Finger and along the coast of the Sea of Sorrows, the story of Demise and its lone inhabitant is told with many variations. Some common threads have emerged, however, and may well be bits of Althea's true story gleaned by scrying and scholarly investigation.

Whatever Althea's original home, she seems to have been cast out from it. Indeed, the volcanic nature of the island clashes so greatly with the rest of the northwestern lands that Demise itself may be a relic of this unknown world. Some of the oldest charts in Lamordia do not show the island, a fact that lends credence to this theory.

As for the medusa Althea, she is very much a prisoner of her labyrinth. It seems certain that she did not build it, nor did she design the enchantments described by Johan Wehner. It seems certain, however, that she has acquired some degree of wealth over the years. Who can say what treasures might have been brought to Demise by explorers and castaways, only to fall into the hands of this terrible she-devil?

Althea's isolation has driven her mad. She desires freedom and, if the stories are to be believed, a mate.

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Indeed, the account of Captain Wehner may well lend credence to this assumption. It seems that Althea always selects a single individual from among any party that enters her lair. All others in the group are then treated as prey, to be stalked and killed at her whim. The chosen one, however, she desires as a mate. It seems certain that anyone who might succumb to the charms of this woman would soon die.

Ecology: The island on which Althea lives is indeed a wonder of nature. From the sea, it looks like a cone of rough black stone rising out of the waves. Newly landed mariners will find its shores bleak and desolate.

Ascending the cone, however, will bring one to the lip of a great caldera. Looking down into this crater will reveal a thriving jungle of plants, hot springs, and rolling banks of steam. Exploration of the jungle will undoubtedly lead to the discovery of the labyrinth at its heart. The lack of animals larger than insects is further proof of this place's unnatural history.

A fact not known to the outside world is that Johan Wehner still lives. Over the years, he has regained the ability to distinguish light from dark, but he cannot make out shapes. He lives in a cave near the sea, where he survives by fishing. He will offer what help he can to those who visit Demise—besides being familiar with every inch of the island, he knows that Althea cannot leave her maze. Those who encounter him will certainly think of him as a mad hermit, for decades of isolation have left him a broken, tragic figure.

Adventure Ideas: Demise is an excellent place for the creative Dungeon Master to stage a shipwreck adventure. The player characters begin the scenario aboard a boat, either in or out of Ravenloft. Through some mishap, they come across the dreadful island and are forced (or choose) to go ashore.

Once on the island, the heroes might encounter Wehner, from whom they will learn much about the creature at the heart of the island. For his part, the old hermit has lost touch with reality and the information he provides might be hidden in riddles, sea-songs, or vaguely coherent reminiscences.

Exploring the labyrinth, which is liberally treated with illusion and similar magics, will be a dangerous and baffling task. Althea will, as mentioned above, pick one of the characters as a would-be mate and then proceed to destroy the others. She takes great delight in tormenting her victims, so she will use hit-and-run tactics whenever possible. She knows the maze well, knowledge that makes her an even deadlier enemy.

I have been blinded. I do my best to write this clearly so that others might read it, but I must rely on the memory of my hands in the making of these letters. I had expected to die in battle with the creature, but this is far worse.

Still, the deed is done. I have met the creature and survived. My knife struck true, for the blade is slick with blood. I managed to avoid meeting its gaze and have been spared the fate of my companions.

Curiously, I was able to escape the maze fairly easily after losing my sight. It could be that some magic made things appear differently inside the structure; without my eyes, such enchantments could have no effect upon me. Whatever the case, I am back in the jungle.

I must sleep now, for I am exhausted. Thank the Sea Goddess that there are no beasts in this place so my sleep should be undisturbed. When I awake, I shall make my way to the top of the caldera, if I am able. From there I shall descend to the edge of the island and commit this journal to the sea.

Once that is done, I do not know what will become of me.

—The final excerpt from the journal of Johan Wehner

Those who survive to reach the center of her maze will find Althea's lair waiting for them. This is a magnificent place with fountains of sweet water, gardens of fruit, and luxurious furnishings. It is also, however, a place of deadly peril. Althea will be quick to deal with intruders who delve this deeply.

Because the labyrinth is a prison designed to contain Althea, her death may result in its partial destruction. Dungeon Masters might want to rule that the entire building crumbles into ruin, leaving the player characters to scramble for safety amid the chaos. Less spectacularly, the magical illusions that serve to make exploration of the place so difficult could fail, leaving it simply a maze of stonework. The DM might also wish to rule that the building remains unchanged, leaving it like a great spider's web that waits to trap the unwary at the heart of the island.

Mummy, Greater (Senmet)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Har'Akir
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Nil
INTELLIGENCE:	Genius (17)
TREASURE:	V (Ax2)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	8 + 3 (45 hp)
THAC0:	11 (10)
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	3–18 (3d6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Fear aura; disease
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Immune to normal weapons; half-damage from magical weapons; immune to cold and non-magical fire.
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6′ 3″ tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (18)
XP VALUE:	8,000

The so-called *Children of Anhktepot* are a horrible and sinister lot. Most were created by the dread lord of Har'Akir himself and are wholly loyal to that vile creature. Senmet, however, was given his power and undead stature by Isu Rehkotep, a priestess who stumbled upon a magical scroll. Now free to act as he will, Senmet has vowed to bring down Anhktepot and replace him as the lord of Har'Akir.

Like all mummies, Senmet is a desiccated corpse wrapped in funereal cloth and bearing an unholy symbol on a chain around his neck. An odor of spices and herbs lingers in the air about him. In places Senmet's wraps have fallen away, revealing withered brown flesh stretched tightly over a skeletal frame. It is impossible to distinguish Senmet from a normal mummy.

Senmet is highly intelligent and speaks many languages in addition to that of Har'Akir. Further, he has a natural ability to command all normal mummies that he might encounter. This power is telepathic, requiring neither words nor motions, and functions on any mummy of whose presence Senmet is aware.

Combat: Senmet is a terrible enemy. Like all greater mummies, he radiates an *aura of fear* that forces everyone who sees him to make a fear check at a –1 penalty. If this check is failed, the normal results are doubled due to the great power with which Senmet has been infused. Spells like a *cloak of bravery* or *remove fear* can enable adventurers to overcome this power.

When Senmet attacks in close combat, he does so by striking with his powerful fists. This allows him to make a single attack (at +1 to hit) that delivers a staggering 3d6 points of damage with each blow that lands.

Anyone hit by Senmet will contract a terrible rotting disease which will prove fatal in 1d12 days. On the day after the disease is contracted, the victim begins to suffer uncontrollable shaking and tremors, making spell casting and feats requiring fine Dexterity impossible. Further, the victim loses 1 point of Strength **and** Constitution from the debilitating effects of the disease and 2 points of Charisma as his or her skin begins to flake and wither away. Ridding oneself of this disease is only possible through use of a *regeneration* spell. A strickened character without access to regenerative magic can be kept alive through receiving *cure disease* spells, one for each day that has passed since the disease was contracted. Note, however, that this merely halts the rot from progressing, and the disease remains in the victim's system until a permanent cure is affected.

In most cases, a diseased person crumbles into dust when he or she dies. If Senmet chooses, however, he can convert someone infected with his rotting disease into a unique breed of zombie or an actual mummy. In either case, the newly created horror is completely under Senmet's control.

When he wishes to create a zombie, Senmet strangles his victim. Within 8 hours, the body rises from the dead as a desert zombie. These creatures are described fully in the adventure RA3, *Touch of Death*. For those who do not own that product, desert zombies are similar to common zombies except that they are faster (Mvt 9) and do not suffer initiative penalties. Desert zombies are

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able to burrow through sand at a rate of 6' per round; their favorite method of attack is to hide beneath the sand, grab passing characters (who are considered AC 10 for purposes of this attack—Dexterity bonuses do apply), and drag them to their doom. Desert zombies resemble desiccated corpses.

In order to create a mummy, Senmet captures someone infected with his disease and takes his victim to his hidden temple. Here, he mummifies the person alive (a terrible and gruesome fate, to be certain). When the process is completed, the victim dies and promptly rises again as a mummy.

Unlike other greater mummies, Senmet is unable to employ clerical spells, having sacrificed this ability for the power to make and control desert zombies. The means by which he made this exchange is unknown and may well tie into Isu Rehkotep's dark worship of the evil Set. If any have learned this secret, they did not live long enough to share it with the world.

Senmet is immune to attacks made with non-magical weapons, while magical weapons inflict only half their normal damage. Spells and other attacks that depend upon cold, ice, or non-magical fire to inflict damage do not harm him at all. However, Senmet is very vulnerable to lightning-based attacks, which do half again their normal damage when used against him.

Like all undead, Senmet is immune to *charm*, *hold*, *sleep*, or similar spells and cannot be harmed by poisons or disease. He is further immune to damage from holy water, although contact with a non-evil holy symbol burns him for 1d6 points. Contact with an unholy symbol of Set actually restores 1d6 hit points per round. For this reason, Senmet always wears a coiled cobra medallion around his neck and regenerates 1d6 hit points per round so long as it remains in place.

Habitat/Society: Long before the domain of Har'Akir was drawn into Ravenloft, Senmet was a priest who served the powerful Anhktepot. An ambitious man, he was not content with his servitor's role and began to plan the downfall of his master. When Anhktepot discovered Senmet's treasonous plotting, he had him mummified and entombed alive. In order to provide the illusion that his reign was unchallenged, Anhktepot buried Senmet with full honors and cast him as a martyr who died to support his pharaoh.

Centuries later, long after Anhktepot's evil earned him a domain in Ravenloft, a young priestess named Isu Rehkotep discovered a magical scroll. She saw at once that it was the process by which Anhktepot created his dreadful greater mummies.

As a noble priestess of the good Osiris, Rehkotep attempted to destroy the scroll, recognizing that it had great power for evil. Her attempts failed, for the magic of the thing would not let it be so easily cast aside. Anxious to see that none should find and use so terrible a treasure, Isu hid it away, naively thinking that it would be lost forever.

Over the years, the power of this evil began to gnaw at her heart. She began to study the works and teachings of Set, the blackest of the dark gods. At first, she believed that she did this only to learn how to recognize evil and thwart it. Gradually, these sinister writings began to take their toll on her. In the end, she began to worship Set as devoutly as she had venerated Osiris.

Now a minon of evil, Rehkotep recovered the mysterious scroll that she had hidden away so long ago. She began to study it and to make plans for its use. What Rehkotep did not fully understand at the time was that her scroll fragments were incomplete. She was able to awaken Senmet, but not to exercise complete control over his actions as she had expected. Still, she does have a limited power to force her will upon Senmet, commanding him for 2–8 (2d4) rounds each day. The rest of the time, Senmet is free to do whatever evil deeds he pleases.

Once he was reanimated, Senmet set about plotting to destroy Anhktepot and claim Har'Akir for his own.

Ecology: Unlike all of the other greater mummies that guard Har'Akir's temples and tombs, Senmet was not created by Anhktepot. As such, he cannot be commanded by the lord of Har'Akir.

Adventure Ideas: Senmet is featured in module RA3, *Touch of Death*. It is quite possible that he will survive the end of that scenario, although his foul plans will have been thwarted. Being a creature of great determination and ambition, however, Senmet will look upon any defeat as nothing more than a set-back.

His desire to rule a land of his own may lead Senmet to travel beyond the domain of Har'Akir. He would certainly find the land of Sebua or Kalidnay (as presented in RR1, *Dark Lords* and the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set) to his liking.

Because he seeks to destroy the lord of Har'Akir, player characters might be inclined to help and even trust Senmet. Those who do will quickly learn that they have made a dreadful mistake: the sinister machinations of this undead fiend have no place for mercy or kindness. Senmet is a harsh and cruel creature whose hunger for absolute power makes him as deadly a foe as Anhktepot himself.

As his evil continues to grow, Senmet will become more and more interesting to the Dark Powers. Indeed, it may not be long before the Mists reach out to grant him his own domain, no doubt to the dismay of PCs who thought him destroyed. If she survived the events of *Touch of Death*, Isu Rehkotep (P8, LE, 35 hp) will accompany him to his new domain; if she perished, she might still be encountered in undead form.

Night Hag (Styrix)

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Darkon
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Carnivore
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (16)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	9
HIT DICE:	8 (40 hit points)
THAC0:	13
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–12 (2d6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Disease; magical sleep
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spell immunities; cold iron, silver, or +3 weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	65%
SIZE:	M (5′ tall)
MORALE:	Average (8)
XP VALUE:	16,000

From time to time, the misty tendril of Ravenloft reach out into other lands and draw in unsuspecting beings. Often, these creatures are innocents, pulled in seemingly at random by the mysterious fluctuations of the Demiplane of Dread. Others are pulled in because of the evil things that they do. In rare cases, however, someone already trapped within the confines of Ravenloft reaches out to snare an outsider. Such is the case with the dreadful Styrix, a native of the lower planes. She was *summoned* into Ravenloft by one of the few people powerful enough to contain her: Azalin of Darkon. Hoping to escape the confines of Ravenloft, Styrix has created a device called the *Rift Spanner* which, she hopes, will see her clear of the misty borders.

Styrix is a night hag, a member of the foul and horrible race that rules Hades. In her normal form, she appears as a withered old crone with skin the color of a fresh bruise, tangled black hair, and eyes that burn a bright red in the darkness. Her lips are puffy and blistered, giving her a sickly look. Her teeth and nails are sharp and pointed, though the former look crooked and uneven while the latter are cracked and broken.

Like all her evil kind, Styrix is able to *polymorph* at will, so few ever see her true form. The shape that she most commonly takes is that of an elderly, gnarled human woman. In this guise, she often passes herself off as a kindly old woman who is alone and without family. Those kind souls who seek to comfort or befriend this poor creature run the risk of a dreadful fate.

Styrix seems to be able to speak any language known to those she encounters. Whether this is an aspect of some magical item in her possession or the product of some enchantment is unknown.

Combat: In melee combat, Styrix generally attacks with a frenzy of ripping claws and biting fangs. This is taken as a single attack that does 2–12 (2d6) points of damage. Anyone hit by her must make a Saving Throw vs. Poison or be infected with a debilitating disease. This ailment is treated exactly as if it had been produced by the 3rd-level clerical *cause disease* spell. While this disease runs its course, the victim's skin is mottled with patches of purple and black that look like open sores and bruises from a dreadful beating. Despite its vile appearance, the disease is not contagious.

In addition to her melee capability, Styrix is able to use many spell-like abilities. At will, she is able to employ *know alignment* and *polymorph self* (although the former is of limited use in Ravenloft because of the detrimental effect that the demiplane has on all detection spells).

As many as 5 times per day, she can release a volley of four *magic missiles*, each of which does 2–5(1d4+1) points of damage. Styrix usually targets all of the missiles at a single foe, hoping to destroy that opponent utterly and to cow his or her companions in one stroke. Thrice per day, she is able to project a *ray of enfeeblement*.

Perhaps her most dreadful ability is her power to cast an unusually potent *sleep* spell. This spell can be targeted at any person of up to 12th level (or any monster with up to 12 Hit Dice). A Saving Throw vs. Spells is allowed, but failure indicates that the target has fallen into a deep magical slumber.

Once the victim is unable to defend himself or herself, Styrix will do one of two things. Most of her victims are

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simply consumed to satisfy her hunger for human flesh. When this happens, the life essence of her victim is torn from the body and transformed into a larva (as described in the *Monstrous Compendium® Outer Planes Appendix*). In Styrix's home plane of Hades, these pathetic creatures are used as a sort of macabre currency. Because such things have no value in Ravenloft, Styrix employs them as mindless guardians. It is said that there are vast catacombs beneath her lair filled with these disgusting creatures.

Styrix's other victims are fed into her *Rift Spanner*, and this terrible devices absorbs their life energy to power itself. Styrix plans to use the *Rift Spanner* to escape from Ravenloft as soon as it is fully charged.

Those who make their saves against the *sleep* spell will become targeted for special torment and destruction later on through her use of a special ethereal *dreamform*. This state is similar to that induced by the *wraithform* spell but actually allows her to enter the dreams of others.

When she does this, an otherwise normal dream becomes tainted by her foul presence and turns into the veriest nightmare. As soon as she enters the dream, she leaps upon the back of the victim and begins to ride him or her like a horse. Throughout the night, the merciless hag beats and pokes at her mount to keep him or her running until dawn. When at last she leaves the dream and the victim awakes, Styrix has permanently drained away 1 point of his or her Constitution. No natural healing occurs on those fitful nights when Styrix intrudes upon a dream, nor can spells be memorized or psionic strength points be regained from such uneasy slumber. Once someone's Constitution is reduced to zero by this draining attack, his or her body dies and the spirit is transformed into a larva. The only way to halt this draining process is to destroy Styrix while the victim still has Constitution points left.

There is one restriction on the use of Styrix's *dreamform;* she cannot enter the dreams of anyone whose heart is pure. Thus, only those who have been forced to roll a Ravenloft Powers Check can be attacked in this manner. Whether or not the check was successful does not matter; only that the character committed some act which required the check in the first place.

Styrix wears a special amulet known as a *charm of blackness*, or *cob*. This periapt is made of dark iron cast in the shape of a 10-pointed star. This pendant has several magical powers and is Styrix's most prized possession. Anyone wearing the *charm* is instantly cured of any disease that he or she contracts. In addition, the periapt gives its wearer a +2 bonus on every saving throw he or she is required to make. Without her *cob*, Styrix is unable to assume her *dreamform* state. Curiously, the amulet does not bestow this power upon others who come into possession of it. When a good-aligned creature uses the *cob*, one of its ten points will break off with each use. When the last point cracks off, the amulet loses its power and becomes worthless. Creating a new *charm of blackness* requires one month of dedicated labor and the destruction of no fewer than 100 larvae.

In addition to her 65% resistance to any type of magic, Styrix is totally immune to any manner of *charm*, *sleep*, or *fear* spell, nor can she be injured by any fire- or cold-based attack, whether magical or mundane in nature. Most weapons are unable to harm Styrix as well, for only those cast from silver or cold iron, or those which have an enchantment of +3 or better, can "bite" on her withered skin.

Habitat/Society: In the lower planes, Styrix and her foul kindred are the de facto rulers of Hades. This is not through any plan or action of their own but is the result of their being the most numerous and most powerful natives of that plane.

Styrix was dragged from her comfortable home in Hades by the power of the lich Azalin. Knowing that the night hags frequently visited the Prime Material Plane seeking souls for the creation of new larvae, he realized that their knowledge of planar travel must be quite extensive—perhaps even sufficient to allow them to enter and leave the Demiplane of Dread at will. No longer able to learn new magics himself, Azalin hoped to cajole a night hag into helping him escape. With this in mind, the lich lord cast a potent spell and opened a *gate* to the depths of Hades and randomly drew one of the night hags into it.

Much to the surprise of them both, the night hag he summoned, Styrix, proved unable to escape Ravenloft. Like Azalin himself, she was now a prisoner of the demiplane. Although she was enraged by the lich's summoning, she dared not attack him—being an intelligent creature, Styrix recognized that she could not hope to defeat Azalin in a direct confrontation. Thus, she agreed to work with him in his attempts to escape from Ravenloft.

Unbeknownst to Azalin, Styrix made not one but two vows on the night she entered his service. The first was to devise a method by which she could escape from Ravenloft. The second and secret one was to see to it that Azalin both knew about her escape and was unable to follow.

Months passed, during which Azalin became less and less interested in Styrix's researches. It seemed quite clear to him that she was accomplishing nothing of any importance and that she was draining a great many resources in her efforts. At last, the lich tired of her and cast her out of his dark castle.

What Azalin did not realize was that Styrix had spent her time learning a great deal about the fabric of Ravenloft. Indeed, she had conceived of the design for a machine that might actually be capable of escaping the Demiplane of Dread. Day after day she conducted magical research and unearthed the carefully hidden secrets of the dark realms. In the end, she undoubtedly knew more about the composition of the demiplane

Night Hag (Styrix)

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than any other living creature.

Free of the lich's yoke, she travelled to the city of Martira Bay on the coast of the Sea of Sorrows. Here, she assumed the guise of an old woman and set up a lair in an old manor on the outskirts of town. For nearly a year, she labored away and built the mysterious *Rift Spanner*.

Recently, she completed work on the dark and terrible machine. It rests in a vast chamber deep beneath the manor house she lives in. The labyrinth of tunnels that encircles the central cavern is filled with larvae created in the months she has lived here. These foul creatures serve as Styrix's guards, keeping intruders from exploring the caverns. Thanks to them, no one has yet discovered the night hag's true nature or the details of her labors.

Ecology: As a night hag, Styrix is eternally hungry. Each day, she must kill and consume one person. Such a high mortality rate would certainly be noticed were it not for the fact that Martira Bay's waterfront district has a highly transient population. When she hunts in this area, Styrix *polymorphs* herself into the shape of a comely harlot or a rugged sailor. In either of these forms she is able to move freely through the waterfront district and seek out victims either to satisfy her hunger or fuel her evil machine.

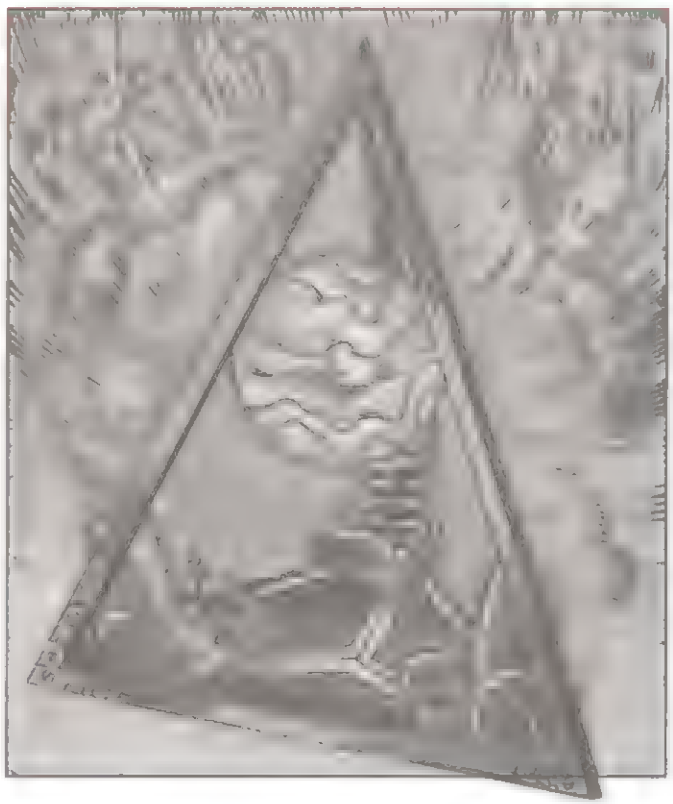
Adventure Ideas: Styrix's plan to escape Ravenloft requires that she fuel her diabolical machine with the life energy of roughly 100 people. This, in addition to her normal hunger, is certainly likely to attract attention. She will gladly claim higher-level characters to power the *Rift Spanner* because they provide correspondingly greater amounts of energy. If she can manage to feed ten 10th-level characters into the machine, for example, it will be fully charged.

Players anxious to find a means of escaping Ravenloft may well covet the *Rift Spanner* themselves. Of course, charging the machine is as evil an act as one is likely to commit. The number of powers checks that must be made to get the machine functioning ought to persuade any player that his or her character would be lost in the attempt to escape Ravenloft. If they come into possession of the charged machine, however, it might well be a fine means of escaping Ravenloft.

Player characters can become ensnared in Styrax's activities if they somehow become aware of the disappearances in Martira Bay and search for the cause. Alternatively, they could hear vague rumors of the *Rift Spanner* and come to investigate.

Night Hag (Styrix)

The Rift Spanner



The *Rift Spanner* is a huge device which was designed and built to puncture the fabric of Ravenloft and allow escape from the Demiplane of Dread. Its ability to do this makes it one of the most powerful magical objects ever constructed. When it is fully charged, it can carry up to three human-sized creatures across the misty fabric of Ravenloft's ethereal border and back to the Prime Material Plane. However, the very ties with the demiplane which give them their special powers prevents domain lords from being able to escape with this device. They are too firmly tied to Ravenloft, and would simply be left behind when it makes its way clear of the misty borders.

This magical contraption, triangular in shape, is composed of a brass framework that stretches some eight feet on a side. The most obvious feature of the device is the great *Iridium Orb* which stands at its center. Fully five feet in diameter, this opalescent sphere glimmers and pulses with the tremendous energies trapped at its heart. Three brass seats, positioned at the corners of the triangular base, face toward the Orb with a small bank of controls before each. Leather straps on each seat can be used to secure an occupant.

Although it usually rests in an inert state, the *Rift Spanner* has two operational modes. The first is used to charge the device in preparation for travel. The second is engaged when the machine is ready to attempt transit across the planes.

Charging the *Rift Spanner* is a very difficult, time-consuming, and gruesome operation. In order to operate, the *Iridium Orb* must be charged with life energy. The more energy in the orb, the better the chance that the spanner will reach its intended destination. Anyone who is seated in one of the brass chairs when the spanner's recharging mode is activated will be instantly slain, drained of all life energy. If the victim is not strapped in, he or she may make a Saving Throw versus Death to leap out of the chair before being killed. When this happens, the victim is reduced to one half his or her current level (rounded down). If the victim is strapped in or otherwise unable to escape the brass chair, no saving roll is permitted.

Each level that the device absorbs gives it a 1% chance of operating successfully when its transit mode is engaged. Thus, if the machine is able to drain ten 5th-level characters of life, it will have a 50% chance of functioning when engaged. Anyone overseeing the charging of the device will have to make a Powers Check for each life consumed by the machine.

The orb can hold up to 100 levels of life-energy safely. As insurance against negative die modifiers, however, it can be overcharged. Each life-energy level beyond the 100th creates a cumulative 1% chance per level that the device will explode when activated, however. If it is ever charged to 200 energy levels, the device will instantly explode. This detonation will be incredible, utterly annihilating everything within 100 yards (no saving throw) and forcing every creature or object between 100 and 1,000 yards to Save versus Breath Weapons (or Disintegration, for items) or be utterly destroyed.

Once the orb is charged, anyone familiar with its operation can set it to travel to a specific point on the Prime Material Plane. Activating the transit mode requires an operator in each of the three chairs to engage a specific control at the exact same time. Failure to trigger all three switches at once bleeds off the energy stored in the orb and forces the machine to be recharged before another travel attempt can be made.

There are three steps in any journey made with the Rift Spanner: dematerialization, transit, and rematerialization. Each of these requires a 1d100 roll against the energy level of the orb. Failure on any one of these three checks indicates that the voyage has been aborted. If this happens, the spanner and its occupants are returned to their starting point with the orb utterly drained of energy.

The journey across dimensions is quite perilous. Anyone who is not strapped in when the *Rift Spanner* begins its voyage has a good chance of being tossed clear during the voyage and lost somewhere between the planes. Each time that the dice are rolled to check on the machine's operation, an unsecured passenger must make a Saving Throw vs. Death or be torn free of the buffeting spanner and lost.

Spectre (Jezra Wagner, The Ice Queen)

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Barovia (Mt. Baratok)
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Winter nights
DIET:	Body heat
INTELLIGENCE:	High (14)
TREASURE:	(Qx3)
ALIGNMENT:	Lawful evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	15, Fl 30 (B)
HIT DICE:	7+3 (47 hp)
THAC0:	13
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–16 (2d8)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Heat drain
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapon to hit
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (5' 1" tall)
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	7,000

Winters in Barovia are not pleasant things. Icy winds blow down from the peaks of the Balinoks carrying heavy snows and bitter cold. But frostbite and avalanche are not the greatest dangers to be found on the slopes of Mount Baratok. For as the days grow short and the nights stretch out, the ice queen Jezra Wagner rises from her seasonal grave.

Jezra is a spectre, and similar to her undead kin in many ways. She retains the appearance of a living woman, save that light passes through her as if she were some manner of projection or image. Although short, just over five feet in height, Jezra is incredibly beautiful. She has fair skin, silver hair, and pale blue eyes that glint like frozen pools. Jezra's clothes are of the finest manufacture, making it clear to all that she was one of Barovia's most wealthy nobles.

Jezra is able to speak just as she did in life. Her voice is sweet and melodic, but carries a tone of authority. She knows the language of Barovia but not of any of the surrounding domains, as she died before they came into existence. Jezra is fond of singing, and the haunting beauty of her fine voice conveys the misery and suffering of unlife so clearly that it is said to have driven more than one person to an early grave.

Combat: Like all spectres, Jezra's primary attack is made with her chilling touch. Most spectres inflict damage with their touch because of the life-sapping energies of the Negative Material Plane. The ice queen's touch draws its wintery power partly from this source, but also from the manner in which she died. Because of this enhancement, Jezra's touch inflicts 2–16 (2d8) points of damage, twice that of the normal spectre's attack.

Jezra does not have the normal level-draining powers of a spectre. Rather, she draws the heat from the bodies of her victims in an attempt to drive off the endless chill that aches in her ghostly bones. Thus, anyone who suffers damage from her touch must make a Saving Throw vs. Death. Failure indicates that the body of the victim has been instantly frozen, transforming it into something not unlike a perfect ice sculpture.

Persons who have been frozen can be revived only by great magical power. A *wish* or *limited wish* will be sufficient, but lesser spells will generally fail. By a curious twist of fate, the *simulacrum* spell can be used to restore a body frozen by Jezra to life.

Those who die by falling prey to Jezra and her heat-draining attack do not rise again as spectres but are simply dead; Jezra has no ability to create more undead.

As an undead creature, Jezra is immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, and all manner of life-affecting spells. She has no physical body, so spells designed to affect solid enemies (like a *web*) will not hinder her in any way. Similarly, she is immune to poisons, toxins, diseases, paralysis, and the like. Holy water splashed upon Jezra will inflict 2–8 (2d4) points of damage. She can be turned by clerics and paladins, provided that they have attained sufficiently high levels of experience.

Jezra is unusually vulnerable to some magics and utterly immune to others. Any attack which normally inflicts damage with cold or ice has no effect upon her. A *raise dead* cast upon her requires Jezra to make a Saving Throw vs. Spells or be instantly destroyed.

As a spectre, the light of day is too pure and true for Jezra to bear. Although it does her no harm, she is pow-

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erless to attack or defend herself when caught in its rays. Because of this, she hides herself away and strikes only after the sun has gone down.

Habitat/Society: Jezra Wagner died at the age of 27 some 75 years after the domain of Barovia came into Ravenloft. She was well known among the nobility and common folk alike, for she was as kind and loving a woman as anyone was likely to meet in such a dark land. The tale of her accidental death, and the terrible fate that awaited her on the other side, is one of Ravenloft's most tragic stories.

Jezra's parents were wealthy boyars, or land owners. Their property was considered to be something of a wilderness holding by most of the gentle folk of Barovia because of its remote location on the slopes of Mount Baratok. This unspoiled land was both a source of joy and wealth to its owners, for a fine vein of silver ran amid the stone. For decades, the Wagner clan has overseen the operation of this mine and been well rewarded for their efforts.

Jezra loved the wild lands of her family's ancestral estate. She cherished each season for the special gifts that it brought to the land. Indeed, no matter what the month or how harsh the weather, she and her older brother Giorggio could almost always be found exploring the wilderness. Indeed, even after her brother vanished while climbing Mount Baratok, her love of the land remained to console her.

In the spring, she explored the forests, watching as life returned to the land. She would slip quietly up to the nests and lairs of the woodland beasts, marveling at the tenacity that pulled them through the winter. When the wild flowers bloomed, she brought them back to decorate her home.

As spring drifted into summer, she would watch the trees bear sweet fruit and swim in the chilly waters tumbling down from the mountain top. It is said that she could mimic the call of any bird native to the area and that the thrushes and finches would come at her call to sing for her.

With fall came a shock of spectacular colors. The countryside of Barovia was afire with orange, red, and yellow foliage. This was the harvest time, and few relished the gifts of nature more than Jezra Wagner.

Winter, however, was the season that she loved the most. With the coming of the first snow, she would dash outside to dance and frolic in its chilling embrace; how ironic, then, that it was the snows of winter that claimed her life.

Jezra's end came as the winter solstice drew near one year. She and several of her friends were climbing the slopes of Mount Baratok, hoping to reach its summit and look out across the grandeur of the Balinoks. It was their hope to see the distant spire of Mount Nyid, which was said to be visible from the highest reaches of Baratok. Their expedition was ill-fated, however, and doom claimed it before they reached the mountain's crest.

Jezra was the first to hear the rumbling. Indeed, this is probably what saved her from the sudden death that claimed her companions. Shouting a cry of alarm, she forced her body into a narrow fissure as the avalanche swept past her, ripping her companions from their ropes and sending them down to their deaths. Those who were not slain by the long fall were crushed to death by the weight of the snow that fell upon them.

Jezra, perched in a narrow cleft, was unhurt. She found that the crack she had taken shelter in was in fact a small cave that ran some twenty or thirty feet back into the cliff. The avalanche, however, had sealed the entrance behind her. With horror, she realized that she had been entombed alive.

Several time she tried to dig her way out of the dark cave. Each time, she gave up the futile effort as more snow fell to seal the entrance. It was not long before her small stock of provisions ran low. The candles she had stored in her pack were all used up, the air in the cave was becoming sour, and her food was gone. Soon, she knew, she would die. Cold fear began to grip her heart as she grew drowsy with the approach of death.

What happened next might be accredited to many things. Perhaps the air was growing thin and she was beginning to hallucinate as her brain slowly starved for oxygen. Perhaps the forces of evil saw their chance to claim this young innocent for their own and sent some dreadful agent to treat with her.

Whatever the truth, Jezra found herself bathed in a ghostly light. Her arms and legs had grown numb and frozen, the first victims of her frosty prison, and she sadly noted that this light brought no warmth with it. If anything, the temperature in the cave fell even lower.

Her interest aroused, she tried to draw herself back from the brink of death. Whatever this mysterious phenomenon was, she longed to know its cause before she died. Her eye focused on the source of the glow and delight welled up inside her. Giorggio, so long presumed dead, stood before her.

The vision moved forward. Short and stocky, with the same charismatic smile that she herself had, this was indeed the exact image of her brother. He wore the travelling clothes that she had last seen him in, but they were tattered and torn.

She reached out her hand to the shimmering vision, grimacing at the frigid fire in her lungs and hardly able to move her arm. The image of Giorggio knelt before her and looked at her with curious, almost unrecognizing eyes.

"Save me," was all she could manage to whisper.

"I cannot," came the reply.

Jezra began to cry, the tears freezing before they could fall from her face. The spirit faded away, leaving her alone and isolated in the darkness of her icy tomb. With her last breath, she cried out for someone, anyone, to save her from death, swearing that she would do any-

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thing to keep her existence from ending like this. Then she closed her eyes and felt the bitter cold around her steal the pitiful remains of her body's warmth.

Somewhere in the darkness of Ravenloft, her pleas were heard. A strange darkness, deeper than the blackness of the cave, seeped out of the soul of the mountain. It coiled around the young woman's body like an ebony snake. Two pinpoints of red light like eyes smoldered to life, yet drove away none of the darkness. Then, like a cobra striking, the blackness plunged into Jezra's body.

As the last traces of the shade vanished into the corporeal flesh of the woman, Jezra twitched and her face contorted in agony. Unseen in her tomb, her body thrashed about violently for several seconds and then was forever still.

Gradually, a cold glow filled the cave. Jezra blinked and opened her eyes. She could feel her hands and her feet again. The air no longer choked her. The cold, however, was redoubled. Her flesh seemed to tremble endlessly, and her bones pounded with an arthritic ache. She cried out in agony and rose to her feet.

Her only thought was to somehow escape from this icy darkness; had she looked down, she might have seen her own body, unmoving in death. Instead, she plunged desperately into the rocks and ice blocking her escape, passing through them as if they were but fog to her.

Not realizing that she had died in the frozen cave, Jezra spent the next several days wandering the slopes of Mount Baratok. Although her heart longed to return to her family estate, she delayed while she searched for her brother, not realizing that she had now become an undead creature, as had he. Alas, search as she would, she found no trace of him.

At last, Jezra descended the mountain. She was not far from her home when she happened upon a furrier whom she knew slightly. Normally, she would have passed him by with just a cheerful greeting. For some reason, however, she now found herself fascinated with the rough-looking man. She drew near him, feeling the warmth of his body even across a distance of several yards. Suddenly, an intense desire overcame her. She rushed forward and caught the man up in an ethereal embrace. It is unlikely that he ever saw her coming or knew what was happening to him.

For a brief moment, as the body of the furrier crystallized in her arms, she felt a relief from the agony that throbbed in her bones. With a sigh, she stepped back and almost wept with delight. This sensation faded quickly. The agony returned, but she knew now how to ease it for a time at least.

Jezra continued on. She came at last to the home where she had been born and, indeed, where she had lived her entire life. She longed to see her parents again, and imagined to herself their surprise and delight when they learned that their beloved daughter had escaped her companions' fate and survived such hardship to return home once again.

Locating them was not difficult. Ironically, she found them just as they were learning from a group of hunters that their daughter had been claimed by an avalanche. Jezra longed to go to them, to tell them that she had survived, and that they should not mourn.

Instead, she found her attention drawn to the heat flooding off of their bodies. She could taste it like the aroma of fine food. It called to her, urging her to leave her hiding place and attack. The ache in her bones was enough to drive her mad.

At last, she could stand it no more. She tore herself away from the window and fled, launching herself into the night. By the time the sun rose, she had left no fewer than a dozen people dead. With each frozen corpse Jezra's pain was lessened, only to return again as biting as it had ever been.

Three long centuries and more have passed since that terrible day. All that time, Jezra has roamed the frozen slopes of Mount Baratok in search of warmth. She does not realize that she died in the cave, believing instead that she is suffering from some strange curse. From time to time, she escapes the agony of her frozen unlife by drawing the heat from a living body and leaving a crystallized corpse in her wake. When she does this, her pain subsides for a number of minutes equal to the level of her victim.

Ecology: As a living thing, Jezra's influence on the natural world ended long ago. Now, she is a terrible aberration. As an unliving thing, she pollutes the world around her with unnatural death and suffering.

The story of the young girl's death and transformation is not unknown in the land of Barovia. Indeed, the Vistani sing a song called *Regina d'Ghiaccio* or *The Ice Queen* which retells the event almost exactly as it happened. This tragic story is often told as a folk story and is frequently taken to be apocryphal by the scholarly and uneducated alike.

The famous vampire hunter Rudolph Van Richten knows better, having encountered the spectre of Jezra Wagner on at least one occasion. It was his assertion that she might be destroyed by anyone who located her frozen corpse and set it atop a funeral pyre. He attempted to do this himself but found the task beyond him. With remorse, he was forced to abandon his quest to lay this unusual spirit to rest.

Jezra's unlife is tied to the coming of winter. As soon as the snows end and the first rays of spring begin to warm the earth, she is forced to retreat to the mountain cave where her body lies. Here, her spirit re-enters the frozen corpse and she sleeps until the last leaf of autumn falls. Thus, the sight of living things that she held so dear in life is lost to her forever.

Adventure Ideas: The obvious adventure here revolves around the destruction of the spectre. There can be much more to such an adventure than a direct con-

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frontation, however. Indeed, when facing the undead, such a rash act is likely to result in the death of one or more party members.

The careful DM will make the adventure revolve around the investigation of Jezra Wagner's life, death, and terrible resurrection. An excellent set of guidelines for such ghost hunting is set down in chapter six of RR5, *Van Richten's Guide to the Ghost*. Using this as a framework, the creative DM ought to be able to construct a great tale of terror to chill the hearts of his or her players.

There are numerous ways that a group of heroes might be drawn into the search for Jezra Wagner. They could be contacted by the modern-day descendants of the Wagner family, who still live in northern Barovia and mine the silver of Mount Baratok. To these people, the story of Jezra and her fate hangs over the head of the family like an ancient curse.

They might also be called upon to complete the quest begun by Dr. Van Richten. With or without his presence, the investigation would follow along the same lines as under the auspices of the Wagner family. Indeed, it is quite possible that the two patron might come together and seek out the PCs as allies. Van Richten feels that the best way to destroy the spectre is by the cremation of its corporeal body. Thus, he will recommend that this be the focus of the investigation. If the players are acting without his council, they are free to act in whatever way they think best.

The adventure might also be set with a more mild beginning. Players who like to explore the world in which their characters live might find the idea of scaling Mount Baratok quite appealing. Of course, they would be certain to encounter the spirit of Jezra Wagner as they climbed higher and higher.

If the PCs are not the type to explore for the sake of exploration, the DM might present them with some reason to travel into the mountains. It might be that a series of murders takes place in Vallaki and the adventurers are called upon to capture the criminal. When he or she flees north toward Markovia, they will have little choice but to follow.

This adventure has the advantage of focusing the attention of the heroes on a red herring. As they battle the snows of the Balinoks, they will expect to confront only the villain they are hunting. Imagine their horror when they find him or her dead and then become themselves hunted by something that must surely have risen from their worst nightmares.

My dear Countess,

For two weeks now we have labored on the treacherous slopes of Mount Baratok. Of the six men who left your so fine home a fortnight ago, three are now alas dead. Two were slain in an accident and we have laid them to rest beneath the ever-frozen snows of the mountain.

The third, however, has been attacked by the creature we seek. It came upon us suddenly as we rested in camp. So beautiful and angelic was the creature that my heart went out of it. Such is always the case when the fair and innocent are claimed by darkness. In any event, there is no doubt in my mind that this silver-haired phantom was indeed this spirit we sought.

She moved with great speed, flashing through the air and coming to a halt near the fire. It seemed to me that she was attempting to warm herself by it when she threw her head back and let out a cry of suffering. Never have I heard anything so tragic as the agony and longing that hung in the air after that great wail.

Ahmbrose, our cleric, grabbed up his holy symbol and held it out to the creature. She turned to face him, seeming to take no notice of the sacred star that he wielded. Indeed, it seemed only to draw her attention to my beloved Ahmbrose. With the speed that I have already described to you, her hand reached out to touch his cheek.

The contact was slight. Indeed, it seemed that she might almost have been stroking his flesh as might a lover. The effect of the touch on Ahmbrose, however, was terrible. He cried out in pain and tried to pull away. Even as he did so, ice crystals formed along his body. Before any of us could react, he had been transformed into solid ice. His inertia sent his now-brittle form tumbling into the fire. With a great hiss of steam, Ahmbrose's body shattered and the fire was extinguished.

Andreas was the first to get a light going, but it was too late. The spectre had vanished and our companion was dead.

We shall remain on our quest for another week. At the end of that time, however, we shall be forced to retreat. Winter is coming quickly, and I do not intend to give my life to the mountain, as so many others have over the years.

With all respect and admiration,
Rudolph Van Richten

—found among the papers of
Lady Catherine Wagner after her death

Thrax (Palik)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Kalidnay
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Water
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (12)
TREASURE:	K, L, M
ALIGNMENT:	Neutral evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	2
MOVEMENT:	24
HIT DICE:	9 (52 hit points)
THAC0:	11
NO. ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	2–12 (2d6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Dehydration; psionics
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Psionics
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6′ 8″ tall)
MORALE:	Elite (15)
XP VALUE:	4,000

PSIONICS SUMMARY:

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Att/Def	Score	PSPs
2	1/2/4	— / —	12	66

Psychometabolism—*Sciences:* Complete Healing and Shadow-Form. *Devotions:* Aging, Cause Decay, Displacement, and Double Pain.

Several years ago, the Mists of Ravenloft reached out to the strange and alien land of Athas. Moving across burning sands that stretched endlessly beneath a smoldering crimson sun, the Dark Powers settled over the city-state of Kalidnay. There, a terrible magic was being worked by the twisted templar Thakok-An. His spell failed, and he and his city were drawn into the Demiplane of Dread (the details of this tragedy are presented in the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set). Most of the folk of Kalidnay and the neighboring town of Artan-ak died that day, but some survived and rebuilt the city-state under Thakok-An's guidance. Unknown to the templar, however, the Dark Powers brought other foul horrors of Athas into Ravenloft with him, one of the most dangerous of whom is Palik.

Palik is a thrax, one of the most terrible creatures to be found on Athas. From any distance more than a few feet away, he looks much like a mul—the unique hybrid of dwarf and human found only under the dark sun. His skin is dark and ruddy, a trait not uncommon in Kalidnay, and his ears are pointed like those of an elf. His body is greatly muscled, indicating a tremendous strength that would give even the greatest wrestler pause. His pale blue eyes shimmer like a desert oasis; when not maddened by his all-consuming thirst, they reveal him as a rational, intelligent being.

A closer look at Palik, especially an examination of his hands, will reveal his inhuman nature. Palik's fingers are unnaturally long, fanning out at the tips to end in disgusting suckers. It is this vile adaptation that marks him as a predator of the sands.

Thrax speaks the language of Kalidnay, but knows no other tongue. He can neither read nor write.

Combat: Palik tends to stalk his prey in shadow-form, for, while this reduces him to a movement rate of 6, it makes him both difficult to detect and attack. In this state, he cannot cross open, well-lit areas, but he is impossible to detect without magical or psionic means. He cannot be attacked while in shadow-form, but neither can he himself strike at an enemy. Once Palik has found a victim, he resumes his normal form and attacks with his incredible speed.

If Palik's chosen target wears armor, he will use his psionic ability to Cause Decay in an attempt to destroy it. This requires him to make an attack roll, for he must touch the armor to affect it. A successful use of this power (as described in PHBR5, *The Complete Psionics Handbook*) causes the armor to corrode into useless debris instantly unless it passes a Saving Throw vs. Acid.

If the victim has no armor, or after his or her armor has been destroyed, Palik moves in for the kill. Palik's great blows inflict 2–12 (2d6) points of damage each. An unarmored victim who is successfully hit must make a Saving Throw vs. Petrification. Failure indicates that Palik has attached his deadly suckers to the victim's

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exposed flesh and can begin to drain away the water in his or her body that same round.

If the target's armor has survived Palix's psionic attack, or if the victim has Armor Class bonuses due to Dexterity or magical items (e.g., a *ring of protection*), then there is a chance equal to 10% times the target's AC that the thrax will make contact with bare flesh (thus, Palik has only a 30% chance of using his special attack against someone in plate armor). Anyone with an AC of 0 or less is safe from Palik's water-draining attack, but such a person might still be beaten to death by the enraged thrax.

Once his suckers are attached, Palik begins to feed by absorbing the water from his victim's body. It takes roughly 1 minute per 20 pounds of body weight for a victim's body water to be drained away. Thus, it takes Palik roughly 10 minutes to fully absorb the moisture from a 200-pound man.

The absorption process is extremely painful for Palik's victim. At the end of each round, the victim loses ¼th of the hit points he or she had when the feeding process started and must make a Saving Throw vs. Death. Failure indicates that the pain has been too great and the victim loses consciousness. As the process continues, the victim suffers a cumulative –2 penalty to the save each round after the first. Any attack or other action made by a character who is currently being drained by the thrax suffers this penalty as well. Once the draining process is 75% complete, the victim always loses consciousness due to the severe dehydration. The pain of Palik's feeding is so great that it is impossible for his victim to cast spells or employ psionic powers while his suckers are doing their evil work.

Those who die from Palik's attack become dried-out husks. From a distance, they look withered and mummified. At the slightest touch, however, the body crumbles away into fine, powdery dust. Once the integrity of the corpse has been broken, resurrection is impossible.

Those who escape from Palik's deadly attack after he has tasted the fluids of their body are in a far more deadly danger. Such persons must make a Saving Throw vs. Death or become a thrax. The transformation of a living man or woman into a thrax is terrible to behold. The process takes 2–4 (1d3+1) weeks, during which time the victim is driven almost mad with thirst and pain. A *remove curse* spell cast upon the victim during this period will instantly end the process. Once the change is complete, however, nothing short of a *wish* can save the victim. Only humans can be transformed into thrax; all other races are immune to the process.

Habitat/Society: When Thakok-An and the city of Kalidnay were drawn into Ravenloft, Palik was stalking a wandering merchant near what is now called Bleak Knoll. He was about to strike when the young man cried out in pain and toppled over. Indeed, Palik himself felt a brief instant of agony. Curious, the thrax moved nearer to the body and examined it. He had clearly been robbed of a victim, for the fellow was dead, but the cause of death was impossible to determine. Palik shrugged and set the matter aside as he drained the corpse of water, leaving a dried-out and withered body.

After feeding, Palik stood and looked around. To his horror, he saw that the entire landscape of Kalidnay had changed. No longer could he see the splendid stone spire of the Great Spear to the north or the low, jagged ridge of the Cracked Spine to the west. Now, the city was an island at the heart of the Sea of Silt. What terrible magic might have caused this he could not imagine.

In the years that have passed since Kalidnay became a domain of Ravenloft, Palik has watched the population of the city grow from the handful that survived the mysterious transition into a great host. He has managed to survive and to keep his presence fairly secret by feeding on escaped slaves, lone travellers on the road to Artanak, and the occasional adventurer. Secrecy and concealment are utmost in his mind when he is hunting.

He has learned something of the nature of Ravenloft from encounters with outsiders. He has decided that he must escape the close confines of Kalidnay and travel through these other lands. He believes, correctly, that there are few (if any) of his kind in this strange demiplane besides himself. This anonymity would enable him to move freely about and hunt openly again, something he desires more than anything else.

Ecology: Palik's kind have long been known and hated on Athas. As such, he knows that a concerted effort will be made to destroy him if the people of Kalidnay learn of his existence. Because of this, he is always careful to destroy the bodies of his victims and to make certain that no one he attacks escapes to tell the day. On the latter note, he is also very careful not to allow the creation of another thrax.

Adventure Ideas: Palik's burning desire to escape Kalidnay is a fine source of adventure scenarios. Arranging for the players to meet him is easy enough once they are in Kalidnay City. Every so often, strong-looking men and women are "recruited" by the templars there to serve as gladiators in the arena. In addition, any wizards spotted in the domain are hunted down and killed in an ongoing effort to root out defilers. Either of these events is likely to send the PCs fleeing from the city and into the wilds to the north where Palik stalks prey. He almost always takes time to converse with outsiders before killing them in hopes that they can help him leave behind this island in the Sea of Silt.

Treant, Evil (Blackroot)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Tepest
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Any
DIET:	Carnivorous
INTELLIGENCE:	Very (11)
TREASURE:	Qx5, X
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	12 (84 hit points)
THAC0:	9
NO. ATTACKS:	2
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	4–24 (4d6)/4–24 (4d6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Animate trees; spells
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Spells
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	H (18′ tall)
MORALE:	Elite (14)
XP VALUE:	14,000

The domain of Tepest has long suffered under the evil of the three hags who rule it. Their wickedness has seeped into the land, permeating it and poisoning even the plants and beasts of the forests. Perhaps the most awful example of this corrupting taint is the dreaded Blackroot. This evil treant dwells southwest of Lake Kronov, near the borders with G'Henna and Markovia. None who pass through these woods do so without attracting his notice and, if care is not taken, his wrath.

Blackroot is a foul and terrible thing. He stands just over 18 feet tall and looks like an ancient oak. His bark is grooved and rough, providing excellent protection from physical attacks. His branches are long and gnarled, never sprouting leaves or showing even the faintest hints of bud or blossom. When he wishes to be seen for what he is, a gnarled face appears to form from the fissures and grooves of his bark. A great and terrible maw, shaped like an inverted "V," opens up beneath two knotty eyes.

Blackroot, like most treants of any alignment, is able to speak with the animals of the forest. His evil is so pervasive, however, that the traditionally neutral animals of the forest near him have become neutral evil. Thus, even the most innocent creature in Blackroot's realm can be a potential enemy for PCs, reporting their every action back to their treant master. Blackroot speaks the languages of Tepest and each of its neighboring domains. He seems to have no understanding of writing, not recognizing it as a form of communication.

Combat: Those who enter the forest attempting to destroy Blackroot are seldom seen again. If they are not destroyed by the wilderness which he commands, they usually perish in combat with this ancient, evil creature when they find him. Blackroot can attack twice per combat round, inflicting 4d6 points of damage with each blow that strikes its target. His tremendous strength and mass is such that it enables him to crumple even plate armor as easily as if it were cardboard.

Blackroot's thick bark provides him with excellent protection from most attacks. However, his plant-like biology makes him very vulnerable to attacks made with magical or mundane fire. Any weapon or spell that employs fire gains a +4 bonus on the attack and inflicts an extra +1 point of damage per die. In addition, any save that Blackroot must make against fire-based attacks is made with a –4 penalty.

Because of this vulnerability, Blackroot will quickly attempt to destroy anyone who is careless with fires in his woods. As he is well aware of the danger that such enemies pose, he prefers to act indirectly against them, directing the savage wolves of Tepest and other animals of the forest to destroy fire-wielding enemies for him. Only if these means fail will he seek a direct confrontation.

All evil treants are very dangerous; Blackroot is even worse than most, having grown in soil tainted with the evil of Tepest's three hags. This infusion of evil has given him several magical abilities that most of his kind do not possess. Once per day he may cast the following spells as a 12th-level druid: *animal friendship, animal growth, animal summoning I, animal summoning II, anti-animal shell, anti-plant spell, call woodland beings, charm person or mammal, create water, entangle, hold animal, hold plant, locate animals or plants, plant growth, putrefy food & drink, repel insects, snare, speak with animals, speak with monsters, speak*

Treant, Evil (Blackroot)

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with plants, spike growth, summon insects, wall of thorns, and *warp wood*. Blackroot has no need of components for his spells; they are all simple acts of will.

Blackroot has the ability to animate the trees of his forest, causing them to obey his mental commands. It takes one round for an animated tree to uproot itself, but once this is done it is fully mobile. At any given time he may have two such followers doing his bidding. These trees conform to the statistics for mature treants, having 10 Hit Dice and inflicting 3–18 (3d6) points of damage with each of their two attacks. They are not actually intelligent but do serve as extensions of Blackroot's own consciousness. Trees under his control must remain within 60 yards of their master, or they revert to their normal status.

Habitat/Society: Blackroot began his life as a tree, not a treant. He was a majestic and noble plant towering above the other trees of the forest and fairly radiating health and stamina. Indeed, so wondrous was this fine oak that a sect of druids settled around it to protect and nurture the ancient plant.

It was not long, of course, before the hags who rule Tepest took notice both of the tree and its protectors. They saw that more and more people were turning to the ways of the druids, venerating nature and its "balance." Such a shift in attention away from the action of the vain and terrible covey was unacceptable.

In order to set things straight, the hags decided to destroy the druids. In order to make certain that others learned the druids' lesson, the hags set down a powerful curse on them. One by one, each of the druids was transformed into a twisted and putrefied tree. So sinister and terrible to look upon were these new trees that the people of Tepest began to avoid the woods. They took to calling the regions southwest of Lake Kronov *Brujamonte* or *Witches' Wood*. As these newly created trees took root, the other flora and fauna of the wilds began to change until they too were twisted and corrupted.

The great oak, however, they reserved for special attention. In their horrible iron cauldron, they brewed a special draught. Composed of things dark and dreadful, it was practically liquified evil. When their brew was done, they took it out to the forest and dribbled it on the roots of the tree. Every night for a month the trio gathered around the tree at midnight and repeated their dark ritual. In the end, as a full moon the color of blood rose into a cloudless sky, the great oak's transformation was completed. With the hags dancing and cackling over their success, Blackroot was born.

Over the years, this once-great tree has became more and more evil. Now shrivelled and twisted, a nightmarish reflection of the resplendent plant that he had once been, Blackroot rules the Witches' Wood. Through the plants and animals of the forest, he keeps a careful eye on all that transpires in that vile place. While he is not under any form of mental domination, he does the bidding of the hags out of respect for their greater evil and in the hopes that he might one day replace them as the master of Tepest.

Ecology: Blackroot survives on a diet of human, demihuman, and humanoid flesh. Because of the large number of goblins that infest the woods of Tepest, he is frequently able to satisfy his hunger without molesting travellers on the Timori Road. From time to time, however, he becomes hungry for sweeter, human flesh. Generally, this happens about once a month.

Anyone who enters the forests of southwestern Tepest will instantly become aware of that place's evil nature. The trees produce bitter fruit, the streams are brackish, stinging insects are everywhere, and thorny undergrowth hinders progress in every direction.

Adventure Ideas: The players might come into contact with Blackroot and his forest entirely by accident. Such an encounter could easily occur as they travelled the Timori Road into or out of Tepest. Blackroot frequently orders his trees to attack caravans and travelling parties on that highway to satisfy his hunger for flesh.

On the other hand, the destruction of the druid cult could also be used as a motivation for the PCs to enter the *Brujamonte*. The very nature of this corrupted wood should entice any druid in the party to examine its mysteries. Groups without such a person in their company could easily be contacted and hired to learn what happened to the druids who once lived in Tepest.

Adventures centering on Blackroot should focus not only on the destruction of the evil treant but also on the restoration of the area. This was once an area of great natural splendor and, with a great deal of effort, it might someday be restored to that state.

Of course, the hags who rule Tepest (detailed in RR1, *Dark Lords*) are certain to take notice of anyone who attempts to destroy their handiwork. They take great pride in the malignant ugliness of the Witches' Wood, and player characters attempting to set right the changes that they have made in the *Brujamonte* are certain to be looked upon as challengers to their authority. As such, the hags will simply seek to destroy them.

Vampire, Illithid (Athaekeetha)

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Bluetspur area
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary or pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Brains; life energy
INTELLIGENCE:	Insane (1)
TREASURE:	Nil
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	1
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	8+3 (55 hp)
THAC0:	11 (9)
NO. ATTACKS:	4
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	5–10 (1d6 + 4)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Mind blast; energy drain
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapon to hit; regeneration
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	90%
SIZE:	M (6′ 4″ tall)
MORALE:	Fearless (20)
XP VALUE:	14,000

One of the most terrible domains in Ravenloft is the dread Bluetspur. Located in the far south of the core lands, it is a land of madness and insanity. The vile illithids (or *mind flayers*) who dwell there keep great herds of intelligent creatures as cattle, feeding on their brains. For these wretched creatures, life is only a period of waiting before an agonizing death. But there are creatures here that even the illithids fear, things made all the more terrible by the fact that the mind flayers themselves created them.

Athaekeetha, like all of the vampire illithids, was created in a foul experiment conducted by the vampire Lyssa Von Zarovich and the High Master of the mind flayers. The experiment was part of an ultimately successful attempt to transform the latter into a vampire. The "prototype" vampire illithids created by these experiments were believed to have been destroyed, but their regenerative powers enabled them to survive and escape into the wild, where they have flourished.

While they look much like normal illithids, this undead species wears no clothing and moves about like wild beasts. Their craniums are smaller than those of their living kin, perhaps a sign of their lower intelligence. Vampire illithids have feeding tendrils that are much longer and thicker than those of normal mind flayers; in addition to their primary purpose of boring through the skull to extract the brains within, these tentacles make excellent bludgeoning weapons, striking with great strength.

Like all vampire illithids, Athaekeetha is unable to speak or communicate with other races. It does seem to be able to convey information its fellow vampire illithids, however; possibly by some manner of rudimentary telepathy. Attempts to communicate with Athaekeetha by magical or psionic means have always failed and always require a madness check (as described in the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set).

Combat: Vampire illithids are able to employ the combat tactics of both vampires and illithids. Their undead nature makes them physically powerful (Strength 18/76), granting them a bonus of +2 to hit (for an adjusted THAC0 of 9) and +4 to damage in any melee attack.

As a rule, Athaekeetha begins any attack by unleashing a powerful *mind blast*. This attack takes the shape of a cone some 60 feet long with a 5-foot-wide base and a 20-foot-wide mouth. Anyone caught in this area must make a Saving Throw vs. Wands or be stunned for 1–6 rounds. Further, any creature which is at least semi-intelligent must make a madness check (see the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set or module RQ2, *Thoughts of Darkness* for details). Dungeon Masters not using these additional rules should substitute horror checks instead.

Once its victims have been stunned, Athaekeetha charges into melee, attacking with its four feeding tentacles. Each tentacle strikes for 5–10 (1d6+4) points of damage and drains two levels of life energy from the victim. A stunned or helpless victim's brain can then be consumed in 4 rounds.

As a vampire, Athaekeetha regenerates 3 points of damage each round. In addition, every time it drains life energy from a victim, it instantly heals 2d8 hit points of damage it has suffered.

Vampire, Illithid (Athaekeetha)

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Many types of attacks have little or no effect upon Athaekeetha. Like most undead, the vampire illithid is immune to any form of *charm*, *hold*, or *sleep* spell. It cannot be harmed by poisons or disease, and its mind flayer heritage gives it a staggering 90% magic resistance. Further, non-magical weapons will not bite upon its rubbery skin.

In spite of its many powers, Athaekeetha is burdened with the weaknesses of the undead as well. It can be turned by clerics or paladins of sufficient level, but only at a –6 penalty. It is not held at bay by holy symbols but can be burned by holy water, which does 1d6 points of damage per vial.

The degenerated state of Athaekeetha's mind keeps it from using many of the special powers that mark both vampires and illithids. For instance, it cannot *charm* enemies or use any of the illithid spell-like or psionic abilities besides *mind blast*. It cannot change shape, as most vampires do, and is unable to summon lesser creatures for aid. Because Athaekeetha is a product of magical experimentation and not true undead, it cannot create more of its kind.

Destroying Athaekeetha is no simple task. Most vampire illithids are forced into gaseous form if reduced to zero hit points and must spend the next 24 hours reforming their corporeal bodies, during which time they are extremely vulnerable and can be slain by any attack. However, while Athaekeetha's physical form can be temporarily destroyed by massive damage, its body continues to regenerate, even if reduced to below zero hit points. Eventually, it will recover from even the most complete destruction; even such foolproof methods as cremation have proved ineffectual. Therefore, the best way to defeat Athaekeetha is to reduce its body to ashes and then imprison the remains in some sort of permanent magical trap.

Sunlight does not harm illithid vampires, although they hate it and will avoid it whenever possible. Other bright lights (including *continual light* spells and the like) offend them, and they will attempt to destroy the source of such illumination whenever they can.

Habitat/Society: Athaekeetha was the last vampire illithid created by Lyssa Von Zarovich and the High Master before they gave up on the experiment; its higher intelligence is proof that at least some progress was being made in the project. Like the rest, Athaekeetha survived the High Master's attempt to destroy these flawed creations and fled into the catacombs that run beneath the entire domain of Bluetspur. With insane cunning, it has since evaded all attempts to recapture or destroy it, remaining free to wreak havoc on any unfortunate enough to fall into its clutches.

While the majority of this debased breed have remained near the mind flayer city, Athaekeetha prefers to haunt the surface, especially along the borders of neighboring domains. Rumors have begun to surface in Hazlan of strange and terrible creatures moving in packs and attacking travellers on the road between Toyalis and Sly-Var. Similar stories have been told in Barovia's village of Immol. These accounts, though unconfirmed, might indicate that Athaekeetha has gathered others of its kind about it and is beginning to look beyond the borders of Bluetspur for prey. If this is the case, it is dark news indeed. Few would deny that these foul creatures are among the most horrible beasts in Ravenloft.

Ecology: Athaekeetha and the rest of its evil breed have no place in the natural order of things. However, since the domain of Bluetspur has only the shattered remnants of an ecology, this is of little consequence. They do not breed and cannot reproduce themselves by preying upon others, as most undead do. They seek to slake their bestial hungers for the blood, brains, and life energy of their victims but can survive for long periods without feeding.

Adventure Ideas: The vampire illithids are introduced in the adventure *Thoughts of Darkness*. Athaekeetha itself is not mentioned by name but could easily be inserted into that storyline to add yet another twist to an already tangled puzzle for the players.

A Dungeon Master wishing to run a highly unusual adventure could arrange for his or her players to receive a plea for help from the mind flayers of Bluetspur. The vampire illithids have begun to become a serious nuisance as they have claimed more and more illithid lives; the Elder Brain decrees that they be stopped. To minimize the distraction, expendable outsiders (the PCs) are brought in to deal with the menace, attracted by extremely generous rewards in the form of magical items harvested from past victims. Mind flayers are highly lawful and will keep their agreement with the PCs to the letter, but they are also wholly evil and will exploit any loopholes in the contract, so the PCs would be well advised to negotiate carefully. . . .

On another note, Athaekeetha and his savage followers might well begin to prey upon the humans, demihumans, and even monsters who dwell in the domains that border Bluetspur. A group of player characters acting as part of a town militia or as guards for a caravan might therefore encounter vampire illithids under the command of Athaekeetha. Such an encounter might be part of a planned investigation or utterly accidental. Imagine the shock of player characters exploring the mysteries of Forlorn or wandering the forests of Kartakass when a pack of degenerate undead mind flayers jumps them from the shadows.

Vampire, Eastern (Mayónaka)

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Special
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (15)
TREASURE:	F
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	1
MOVEMENT:	18
HIT DICE:	8+3 (43 hit points)
THAC0:	11 (8); (5 with katana)
NO. ATTACKS:	1 (touch) or 3/2 (katana)
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	8–13 (1d6+7); 11–20 (1d10+10) or 12–22 (2d6+10)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Energy drain; *jump:* swordsmanship
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	+1 or better weapons to hit; regeneration; invisibility; half-damage from cold and electricity
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (7′ tall)
MORALE:	Champion (16)
XP VALUE:	10,000

Mayónaka wanders the domains of the Core, seeking out the greatest warriors in Ravenloft and challenging them to duels. While he hopes that he will die in such a match one day and thus be freed of his eternal curse, he has yet to meet anyone strong or skilled enough to defeat him.

Mayónaka dresses himself in common robes that effectively conceal his oriental arms, armor, and features from the people that he encounters in his travels. Beneath his robes, he wears the armor of a samurai and carries an assortment of unusual weapons. Mayónaka stands just under seven feet tall and has the smooth build of a graceful athlete. His hair is short and dark, matching perfectly the endless night reflected in his midnight black eyes.

Mayónaka speaks the Common Tongue of Kara-Tur, as well as that spoken in the western realms of Toril. He has picked up a fragmentary knowledge of the languages of Ravenloft's various domains, but this is only satisfactory for simple conversations.

Combat: As an expert warrior, Mayónaka is a deadly opponent. With the abilities he gained as a vampire, he is almost unbeatable.

Like all vampires, Mayónaka is tremendously strong. Indeed, he is even more powerful than most of his undead kin. His unnatural Strength rating of 19 gives him a +3 bonus on all melee attack rolls and a +7 bonus to all melee damage rolls, for a total of 8–13 (1d6+7) points of damage for each bare-handed blow.

In addition to the damage inflicted by his crushing blows, anyone struck by Mayónaka is instantly drained of two life energy levels. This is a by-product of the vampire's terrible nature and can be used by Mayónaka whenever he touches the exposed flesh of a victim. He need not employ this special ability if he chooses not to.

Mayónaka does not normally fight bare-handed. Instead, he wields a keen silver katana, or oriental sword, that has been in his family for generations. Oriental runes run down the side of the blade, naming it *Tasogare* or "twilight" in the language of Mayónaka's homeland. The katana is described in PHRB1, *The Complete Fighter's Handbook*; it can be used either one- or two-handed. As a one-handed weapon it does 1d10 points of damage against small or medium-sized targets and 1d12 against large ones. As a two-handed weapon it does 2d6 to both types of targets. The katana is a medium weapon that weighs 6 pounds and has a speed factor of 4. *Tasogare* is enchanted, giving it a +3 on all attack and damage rolls. In addition, once per day it can be used to cast a *darkness, 15′ radius* spell. Anyone holding the sword can see normally in the area of darkness, which remains centered on the weapon itself. Mayónaka's Strength bonus of +3 to attack and +7 to damage applies when using *Tasogare*.

Like all eastern vampires, Mayónaka has the ability to render himself *invisible* at will. When in this state, he has all of the normal advantages associated with invisibility (such as a –4 on all attack rolls made against him). When he is about to enter combat, fading from view is generally his first action.

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Anyone attempting to attack Mayónaka must employ a weapon that has at least a +1 enchantment. Any weapon of lesser quality will pass through his body without seeming to strike anything. Even if magical weapons are employed and he is harmed, Mayónaka regenerates 3 hit points per melee round.

If he is driven to 0 hit points, Mayónaka is not slain. Rather, he is forced to assume a gaseous state similar to that created by a *wraithform* spell (see below). Once in this state, he has 12 rounds to reach his current resting place. If he fails to accomplish this feat, his vaporous form breaks up and he is destroyed. If he does reach his resting place, he must rest there for 8 hours and will then rise again with his body wholly regenerated. When he is in this vaporous form, no weapon or spell can harm him, he can pass through even the smallest crack or opening, and he appears to be nothing more than a drifting cloud of shimmering fog. Unlike more traditional vampires, he cannot assume this state at will but must be driven to it by the destruction of his physical body. Similarly, he has no natural ability to shape change.

As an undead creature, Mayónaka is immune to all manner of *sleep*, *charm*, *hold*, or other spells that depend upon biological function for their effects. Poisons, diseases, and similar things have no effect upon him at all. His undead nature also makes him very resistant to cold and lightning, so that all such attacks do only half damage to him.

Mayónaka has the natural ability to *spider climb* and *jump*, as if he were employing the spells of the same name. He uses these abilities to seek out his victims and to escape from his pursuers when need be. Like all eastern vampires, he lacks the natural charming or summoning abilities of the western vampire.

There are means by which Mayónaka can be held back and even driven away by those who have the courage and wisdom to confront him with the correct tools. He cannot approach anyone who presents a lawful good holy symbol. Instead, he must remain at least 10 feet away from the symbol until some means can be found of removing the offensive object. It is important that the person presenting the icon be a strong believer in the deity to which the symbol is sacred, however, or it will have no effect upon the vampire. Similarly, he cannot bear the presence of ginger root and will not come within 10 feet of it. If an unbroken line of powdered ginger is made on the floor, he cannot cross it.

It is possible, although quite dangerous, to use some of these items as weapons against the vampire. If he is touched with a holy symbol, his flesh is burned for 1d6+1 points of damage. Holy water or ginger water splashed upon him does 1d6+1 points of damage per vial that strike his flesh.

Exposure to direct sunlight is just as deadly for Mayónaka as it is for any other vampire. Thus, a single round of exposure to the purifying rays of the sun will utterly annihilate him. However, running water has no negative effect on Mayónaka. Further, he is not required to obtain an invitation before entering the home of a potential victim, nor do mirrors distress him.

Unlike the traditional vampire, Mayónaka's resting place is not dictated by the place in which he died. He has no need to maintain a coffin or similar sanctuary. When the sun lightens the eastern sky, Mayónaka must seek out the place where he last killed someone. He must find a lair within 100 feet of the spot on which his victim died in which to pass the daylight hours. If he cannot escape the daylight and remain within the required radius of the kill, his body crumbles away and he dies.

Any human slain by Mayónaka's life-energy drain will become a vampire in turn. The transformation into unlife occurs one day after burial. Those who are not buried will not rise as vampires; thus, tradition dictates that all who die at the hands of these undead be cremated. Mayónaka recognizes the horrible nature of the living death and would wish it on no other, so he never willingly creates new undead. When he takes a life with his level-draining ability, he always sees to it that the body is destroyed. If the victim died with honor, he arranges a very solemn ritual in which great respect is shown for a worthy enemy before a pyre is set and the body destroyed. If the victim died in a cowardly or dishonorable way, then no such courtesy is shown and the body is merely tossed onto a fire and forgotten.

Habitat/Society: Mayónaka was born nearly a century ago in the lands of Kara-Tur in the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting. He came from a noble family, having a father and mother who were both samurai of great distinction. As the youngest of three children, Mayónaka lived in the shadow of his two older sisters, who were proving themselves to be masterful warriors. Their growing fame simply made Mayónaka more determined to win a name for himself as a samurai greater than any who had ever lived before.

His chance came when he was seventeen years old. Both of his sisters had vanished while exploring an island that was said to be haunted. It was generally assumed that anything deadly enough to defeat them was more than a match for anyone else, so few were interested in investigating the matter. Mayónaka, however, took up his sword and set out for the island.

As he explored the island, he discovered that it was indeed the lair of some horrible, undead creature. Further, he found that the beast had captured his sisters and was subjecting them to horrible tortures and temptations in an attempt to corrupt their honorable souls.

Sickened by what he saw, Mayónaka vowed to free his sisters and see to it that the monster was destroyed. Moving as quietly as he could, Mayónaka snuck into the monster's lair and reached the cages where his sisters were held. As he worked to free them, the sisters told

Vampire, Eastern (Mayónaka)

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him of their capture and the hideous vampire spirit that had tortured them. Working quickly, Mayónaka managed to free them and the three began to flee the villain's cave.

Suddenly, the invisible vampire attacked them. In the confusion that followed the surprise attack, Mayónaka was sent tumbling over what appeared to be an almost bottomless fissure. His sisters, enraged by the loss of their brother, drove the monster off and escaped from the island in Mayónaka's ship, little knowing that their brother still lived.

Hours later, Mayónaka awoke on a ledge that protruded from the walls of the endless shaft. With much effort, he climbed the rough stone face and reached the vampire's lair. Much to his horror he found that the creature was fully recovered from its earlier wounds. Delighted to discover that it might still have a prisoner to torture, the vampire attacked. The battle was long and terrible. In the end, the samurai was triumphant. Sadly, he too was dying. The vampire had tasted his life essence and left his soul drained and tainted. With a final prayer to his ancestors, he died.

To his surprise, he awoke a day or so later. His wounds, it seemed, were completely healed. Indeed, he felt better than he ever had before. He left the vampire's lair and headed out of the cave. With luck, he hoped to rejoin his sisters before they left the island. As he reached the cave's mouth and stepped out into the sunlight, he found himself wracked with horrible pain. He turned and tossed himself back into the cool darkness of the cavern just in time. With horror, he realized that he himself had become undead.

Mayónaka spent the next several days coming to grips with his new condition. While any lesser man would have collapsed in despair and given in to the bestial urges that now burned within him, the samurai did not. Instead, he meditated and prayed, seeking the council of his ancestors. At last, he decided that he must return to his home. With luck, the priests there could drive this curse from his body.

Mayónaka fashioned a crude boat and set sail. He spent the next few days at sea. Each morning, he would retreat into a coffin-like wooden box until the daylight passed. Because he had not yet slain anyone, he was not bound to rest in a given area. The voyage was difficult, not because of bad weather or lack of seamanship, but because Mayónaka was beginning to feel the vampire's hunger for human life. By the time he reached the shores of his native land, he found himself weak with hunger.

Because he was left without navigational instruments, Mayónaka was not certain where he had come ashore. He began to explore, coming across a monastic encampment of monks. Careful not to reveal his nature to them, Mayónaka presented himself to them shortly after nightfall and asked for their help. They took him in and answered all his question. Much to his delight, he found that he was within thirty miles of his home.

The night passed quickly, for the monks saw many travellers and had news of Mayónaka's sisters and their return. He learned, as he had expected, that he was believed to have died in the battle with the vampire. Indeed, it seemed that his sisters were being hailed as great heroes for their valor in destroying the beast.

Had his mind been clear, the young vampire should have known that this was to be expected. However, the darkness that is vampire's blood burned in his veins now. Reason faded before an onslaught of sinister emotions, jealousies, and hatred. Soon he had convinced himself that his sisters deliberately left him for dead, fleeing before the threat of the vampire so that they could return home and claim victory. Indeed, had it been only an accident that sent him tumbling into that chasm? Probably not. Perhaps they had even struck a deal with the vampire to lure their brother out to the island. No doubt they knew that he was destined to become a far more skilled warrior than they and devised this scheme to see him destroyed.

At last, the rage and hunger proved to be too much for the samurai vampire. He flew into a wild frenzy and killed the monks, feasting on their lives and laughing at their pathetic attempts to drive him off. When the sun arose, he hid himself away in their ravaged camp and slept. In his heart, now, he knew that he must rest near the site of his last kill. He saw now the pattern that his life must take.

The next evening, he began to move back toward his home. His tortured soul hungered for the hour when he would stand before his sisters. They would cower before him, aware at last that their plan had failed. Their treachery would be exposed, and then they would die. Somewhere, deep in his heart, a voice of reason cried out that his sisters were women of honor, but the hunger of his vampire's nature was far too potent to be swayed.

As the sun began to lighten the horizon, Mayónaka found a small home that belonged to an elderly couple. As they slept, he descended upon them and drained them of their lives. By the time a cock crowed to greet the sunrise, he was fast asleep in their peasant's bed, nestled between the two cooling corpses.

The next night brought him to the edge of his family's ancestral lands. Aware that he had no time to act before the coming of the sun, he found the home of a young couple and entered it. They recognized the young man as their lord, expressing relief that he was still alive when all around them thought he was dead. Scoffing at their false protestations of happiness, Mayónaka killed them and fed. Inside his fading soul, the tiny spark of his humanity flickered and grew dim.

The next night, Mayónaka went to his parent's castle. He had learned that walls were no obstacle to him in his vampiric form and quickly scaled them. As the night passed, he moved from room to room, killing everyone in the fortress. At last, he came to the rooms occupied by

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his family. He moved to the large gong that was used to call the castle to alert in times of crisis and struck it with his fist. To his surprise, his new strength was so great that he shattered the thing. However, the tremendous sound that it made brought his parents and sisters racing into the hall, ready for battle.

At first, Mayónaka watched them. Lurking invisibly in the background, he watched as they discovered that everyone else in the castle was dead. At last, he became visible and confronted them.

His father, normally a reserved and quiet man, was so happy to see his lost child that he began to weep. As he rushed forward to embrace his son, Mayónaka struck with his katana. The keen blade flashed in the night and beheaded the old samurai with a single stroke. His mother cried out in horror and his sisters drew their weapons. They advanced on Mayónaka, under the impression that he was some form of monster that had taken their brother's shape.

Mayónaka scoffed at them. He attacked them and, with the aid of his new vampiric abilities, easily killed them both. As he stood over their bloody corpses, he turned to his mother and faced her in single combat. Despite the passing of many years since her last duel, she was an expert swordsman. Time after time, Mayónaka struck, only to have his blows fended off. At last, his great strength snapped the blade of her katana and left her defenseless before him. As she calmly awaited death, he stepped forward and beheaded her. As her body fell across her husband's and her blood mingling with that of her daughters, the last spark of humanity in Mayónaka's soul faded and was gone.

Mayónaka looked around at the carnage he had sown. All around him was death and desolation. With disgust, the vampire samurai remembered the battle against his family. For all their supposed skill and might, they had been no match for him. His skill as a warrior was, as yet, untested. He vowed to wander the world until such time as he found a worthy enemy: to make it his lot in life (or death) to seek out the mightiest warriors and test himself against them. When he found someone whose blade was faster and whose skill was greater, he would accept death with honor. In the interim, many lesser foes would die and feed his newly discovered lust for life energy.

The next evening, when he left the desolate castle, he stepped through the gates and into a rolling fog. He had not gone twenty paces before he knew that something was amiss. Whirling, he saw that the castle was gone. Somehow, he had been transported to another land.

In the years since he was drawn into Ravenloft, Mayónaka has travelled throughout the Demiplane of Dread. He has fought werewolves in Kartakass, battled the illithids of Bluetspur, and triumphed over the Drow of Arak. While he has never faced the lord of a domain, he has battled some of Ravenloft's most powerful creatures and, in every instance, defeated them.

This has left him somewhat despondent. He has grown tired of his unlife and is now desperate to see it ended. Yet he still holds to his vow and refuses to put forth less than his best effort in battle. If he is to die, it must be at the hands of someone who is truly his superior in combat. The longer he lives, however, the more certain he becomes that his ultimate reward will be forever denied him.

The Vistani know of this wandering creature, and speak in pitying tones when they are asked about him. They call him *Ritterwig*, which means *the eternal warrior*, and say that an old prophecy of their people holds that no man's hand will ever bring him the ending he seeks.

Ecology: As with all vampires, Mayónaka is not an aspect of the natural world. He feeds on that world, draining away the life energy of its creatures, but gives nothing back to it. He is an obscene aberration, the likes of which is seldom encountered by man.

The aura of evil and unlife that surrounds Mayónaka is so absolute that animals and similar creatures can sense it. Horses will snort and bay at his presence, dogs will howl and bark at him, and cats will hiss and spit.

Mayónaka's existence is nomadic at best. Each night, he travels in search of a warrior to challenge. If he does not find one, he kills someone just before dawn so that he may rest near the site of his or her demise. It is not difficult to follow his progress across the lands of the Core, for he leaves a fairly regular pattern of bodies in his wake.

Adventure Ideas: Mayónaka makes a fine opponent for any character who feels that he or she is the best warrior in the land. Such a person will attract the eternal warrior like a beacon in the night, for he or she promises a chance at release that Mayónaka cannot pass up.

Mayónaka lends himself well to adventures that are cast in the "most dangerous game" mold, where one of the heroes is to be hunted like an animal for the satisfaction of the vampire samurai's hunger for life energy. He might capture a group of heroes and release them at separate points in a thick forest or vast underground maze. As they seek to find their companions and a way out, he moves about and tries to destroy them one by one.

The players could stumble across Mayónaka's trail of corpses and decide to follow it to its source. This is especially useful if they have a natural tendency toward being vampire hunters or righters of great wrongs. For his part, Mayónaka will be fascinated at the thought that someone is actually stalking him. He will assume that these must be great warriors and will begin to stalk them as well, turning the hunters into the hunted.

Vampyre (Valadimir Ludzig)

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CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Falkovnia
FREQUENCY:	Unique
ORGANIZATION:	Pack
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Blood
INTELLIGENCE:	Exceptional (16)
TREASURE:	F
ALIGNMENT:	Chaotic evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	4
MOVEMENT:	12
HIT DICE:	8+3 (46 hit points)
THAC0:	11
NO. ATTACKS:	3
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1–4 (1d4)/1–4 (1d4)/1–6 (1d6)
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Charm
SPECIAL DEFENSES:	Nil
MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Steady (12)
XP VALUE:	3,000

Nature takes great care to insure that there is always a balance of predators and prey. In the oceans, there is the ever-present shark, constantly seeking to satisfy its dreadful hunger. In the jungles, the great cats are always lurking in the shadows, ready to strike down the unwary. Even humankind cannot escape this inevitable fact, for nature has seen fit to create the vampyres, a deadly race of predators who move among humankind and strike down the careless.

Vladimir Ludzig lives within the walled city of Lekar. Here, his cunning and unmatched bloodlust has made him the master of that city's vampyre population. In appearance he is very much like a normal human, although he looks as if he might have a touch of elvish blood somewhere in his past. His dark hair, seemingly bottomless eyes, and perfect physique make him one of the most physically attractive people any group of adventurers is ever likely to meet.

Ludzig is fond of wearing harsh clothing fashioned from supple black leather. He often adorns his outfits with chains made of silver or platinum and a sash of crimson worn as a belt. He never carries a weapon, needing none beyond his own teeth and claws.

As a native of Falkovnia, Ludzig speaks the common language of that domain. He has picked up fragments of the dialects spoken in Mordent, Darkon, and Lamordia, although his command of these languages is adequate only for the most basic of conversations. When he speaks, Ludzig always adopts a snobbish tone.

Combat: Ludzig's bloodlust sets him apart from even the most horrible of his kin. When he enters combat, he does so with a zest and glee that is almost impossible to describe. He delights both in ripping enemies apart quickly and in leaving them to linger in painful agony for long periods of time.

In melee combat, Vladimir Ludzig strikes with his long, sharp fingernails. These terrible claws are unnaturally keen and hard, ripping through flesh as if they were razors. He is able to make two such attacks each round, inflicting 1–4 (1d4) points of damage with each successful hit. In addition, he is able to deliver a savage bite. His fangs, every bit as long and sharp as those of the most savage nosferatu, inflict 1–6 (1d6) points of damage with each successful attack.

Anyone bitten by Ludzig must deal with the foul chemicals in his saliva. These enter the bloodstream and quickly attack the brain of the victim. If a Saving Throw vs. Poison is not successful, the person bitten is *charmed* by the vampyre. The more damage inflicted by the vampyre's bite, the more toxin is injected, and the harder it is for the body to resist. Thus, every 2 points of damage inflicted by the bite imposes a –1 penalty on the victim's saving throw. Once a victim is charmed, he or she will no longer resist Ludzig's attacks, eliminating the need for the vampyre to make additional attack rolls. If other vampyres are present, the victim will still resist their attacks until such time as he or she fails a saving throw for each attacker.

Habitat/Society: Unlike the majority of Ravenloft's vampyre population, Vladimir Ludzig is not a native of the Demiplane of Dread. He was born and raised in an all-but-unknown world where the race of vampyres long ago brought down humankind. Here, Ludzig was

Vampyre (Valadimir Ludzig)

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a great warlord who, like any vampyre of importance, kept a large stock of human slaves to feed himself and his followers.

Ludzig's treatment of his captives was far from humane, but probably not much worse that was the norm for that world. If he was slightly more evil and cruel than his peers, the corruption of that world was such that only his unfortunate slaves noticed.

Then one night, as the crimson moon stood high above his palace, Ludzig's human slaves revolted. He mercilessly crushed the uprising and captured its leaders. To his surprise, the architects of the failed coup proved to be outlanders. They were human, but not natives of his world. He found them far more aggressive and dangerous than the cowed race of humans his kind kept as slaves.

Before he had them killed, Ludzig tortured them to learn all that he could about their past. He discovered that there were whole worlds where the existence of his race was undreamt of. Looking upon these as hidden gems, objects for future conquest, he ordered his wisest followers to begin studying the ways in which access to such lands might be had. It was clear the captured outlanders had employed some manner of magical ship to reach his world, but no sign of their vessel was ever found.

After years of research, Ludzig's scholars claimed to have isolated a means by which a magical *gate* could be opened to another world. They sent for their master and arranged for a demonstration of their new magic. Ludzig watched with glee as they drew mystical symbols on the floor, set magical candles alight, and chanted mysterious spells. When the sages completed their work, a shimmering portal appeared in the air.

Beyond the magical opening, Ludzig saw a great city that looked very much like his own, but populated by humans. As he watched its folk pass before his eyes, his mouth watered, and he thought of a whole new world of unsuspecting prey waiting for him and his kind to feast upon. Then, without warning, the spell went disastrously wrong. The portal suddenly reached out like the jaws of a great gaping mouth and swallowed Ludzig and the sages whole. Ludzig found himself falling in seemingly endless clouds of fog. A surge of energy swept through his body and he lost consciousness.

When he awoke, Ludzig found himself in the city of his vision. Two of his sages lay nearby, but they had not survived the journey. He quickly disposed of their bodies and set about learning as much as he could about the world he was now trapped in.

Within a year, he found that his initial conceptions about this world were wrong. Other vampyres did exist here, but they were far fewer than on his world and were forced to hide their activities for fear of retaliation from the humans, who vastly outnumbered them. Ludzig made contact with the vampyres in Lekar and, before long, was the head of that sinister band.

Resigned to the fact that he will never again see his homeland, Ludzig envisions a day when his kind will overwhelm the humans first in Lekar and then in all of Falkovnia. He is still coming to grips with the unusual nature of Ravenloft and doesn't fully understand that it is a demiplane and not a true world.

Ecology: Vampyres are an ancient race of predators that have fed upon humankind since before the dawn of recorded history. Ludzig takes great pride in his heritage and looks upon humanity as nothing but cattle upon which he can feed. He sees himself as the deliverer of his people, who will raise them back to their rightful position as masters of these human cattle. His followers believe as he do, making the band a pack of savage hunters with no regard for human life or the suffering they cause.

Ludzig's plans are grand indeed, but they may not be as far-fetched as they sound. In the decade or so since he came to Falkovnia, the vampyre population of Lekar has trebled. While this has resulted in an increase in the number of killings that his folk must make to support themselves, careful management of "the herd" has kept it from becoming an overwhelming concern of the city officials and the domain's master, Drakov.

One way in which Ludzig has kept the body count low is through the use of horrific feeding houses. Here, captured humans are kept alive so that the vampyres may feed upon them day after day. To be certain, this brutal existence soon drives the captives utterly mad, but that means little to the vampyres. These disgusting places are so vile and repulsive that anyone entering one for the first time must make a horror check immediately.

Adventure Ideas: Player characters might be drawn into conflict with Ludzig and his followers when one of their number or associates is captured and taken to the feeding houses. Because of the large scale of vampyre operations, and the ease with which vampyres blend in with their prey, PCs will have a difficult time convincing city officials that the menace is as great as it truly is.

Any attempt to battle the vampyres will result in a great counteroffensive by the sinister creatures. This can be especially effective if the players do not realize the enormity of the plot their characters have stumbled upon. The shock and horror they experience when they discover that they face not a pack of a dozen or so vampyres but a veritable horde of over a hundred should be most rewarding.

Calculating Experience Points

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One of the things that game designers love to do is change things. As of this writing, it has been about four years since the final touches were put on the Second Edition of the ADVANCED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS ® rules. In that time, a number of major and minor changes have been made to the game system.

One of the more important revisions is a change to the formula used to calculate experience point rewards for defeating the various monsters encountered during an adventure. This revision was introduced in the *Monstrous Manual* hardbound and has become the new standard for the calculation of experience points.

The experience point values for the monsters in this *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM®* Appendix have all been calculated using the new, revised rules. The following table, updating the one printed in the AD&D® 2nd Edition *DUNGEON MASTER® Guide*, is provided in order to make the Dungeon Master's task easier when designing his or her own monsters.

It is worth noting that there are cases where DMs will want to deviate from the values given here. Some monsters are so powerful that the experience point rewards generated with these tables will be far less than a party might deserve. A good example of such creatures are the denizens of the Abyss and similar realms described in the MC8: *Outer Planes Appendix* or the various lords of Ravenloft's domains.

What has changed?

None of these changes affect the general way in which experience points are calculated. A DM still begins by noting the number of Hit Dice that a monster has and then applying some modifiers based on the general powers and abilities of that creature. Only the modifiers table (Table 32) has changed, although both tables have been printed here for easy reference.

Two new entries for psionic abilities have been added to the table. Thus, the possibility that a monster might have psionic disciplines or sciences (as detailed in PHBR5, *The Complete Psionics Handbook*) available to it has now been taken into account. Dungeon Masters who are not using psionic powers in their campaigns can simply ignore these additions.

Both the Magic Resistance and Breath Weapon entries have been split into two categories, reflecting the great range of possibilities within these classifications.

The bonus normally awarded for flight has been expanded to include other special forms of movement. Thus, a monster like a bullette or xorn, which can travel through the earth at great speed, would receive the same adjustment to its experience point value as a flying creature.

Of course, exceptions and unusual cases will still crop up. When this happens, Dungeon Masters will simply have to exercise a little common sense in the awarding of experience points.

Table 31: Creature Experience Point Values

HD or Level	XP Value
Less than 1-1	7
1-1 to 1	15
1+1 to 2	35
2+1 to 3	65
3+1 to 4	120
4+1 to 5	175
5+1 to 6	270
6+1 to 7	420
7+1 to 8	650
8+1 to 9	975
9+1 to 10+	1,400
11 to 12+	2,000
13 or higher	2,000 + 1,000 per addition Hit Die

Table 32: Hit Dice Value Modifiers

Modifier	Ability
+1	Armor Class 0 or lower
+1	Blood drain
+1	Breath weapon (under 20 hp maximum damage)
+1	Can fly or has other special movement power
+1	Cause disease
+1	Employs psionic devotions
+1	Greater than normal hit points (over 6 hp/HD)
+1	Has and uses magical items or weapons
+1	High (13–14) or better Intelligence
+1	Hit only by magic or silver weapons
+1	Immunity to a spell
+1	Immunity to or half-damage from a weapon type
+1	Invisible at will
+1	Magic resistance (less than 50%)
+1	Missile weapons or ranged attack ability
+1	Multiple (four or more) attacks per round
+1	Regeneration
+1	Spell casting (level 2 or less)
+1	Unlisted special defense mode
+1	Unlisted non-magical special attack mode
+2	Breath weapon (over 20 hp maximum damage)
+2	Causes weakness or fear
+2	Employs psionic sciences
+2	Magic resistance (50% or better)
+2	Multiple attacks inflict over 30 hp of damage
+2	Paralysis
+2	Poison
+2	Single attack inflicts over 20 hp of damage
+2	Spell casting (level 3 or greater)
+2	Swallows whole
+2	Unlisted special magical attack mode
+3	Energy drain (level or ability draining)
+3	Petrification

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Appendix II: Children of the Night

The moon is full.
The mists have risen.
The terror is upon you.

Step into these swirling clouds of fog, and you will come face to face with creatures more terrible than you can imagine. Be careful, for those who are embraced by the mists seldom live to tell the tale.

Children of the Night presents complete descriptions of 20 unique individuals for use in the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting. Ideal for use as important NPC or major villains, these creatures are certain to linger in the nightmares of player characters for years to come.

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